VISIT…

UNDERGROUND PRODUCTIONS

NR28 up 2004

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All you need to know about the spraypainted apple

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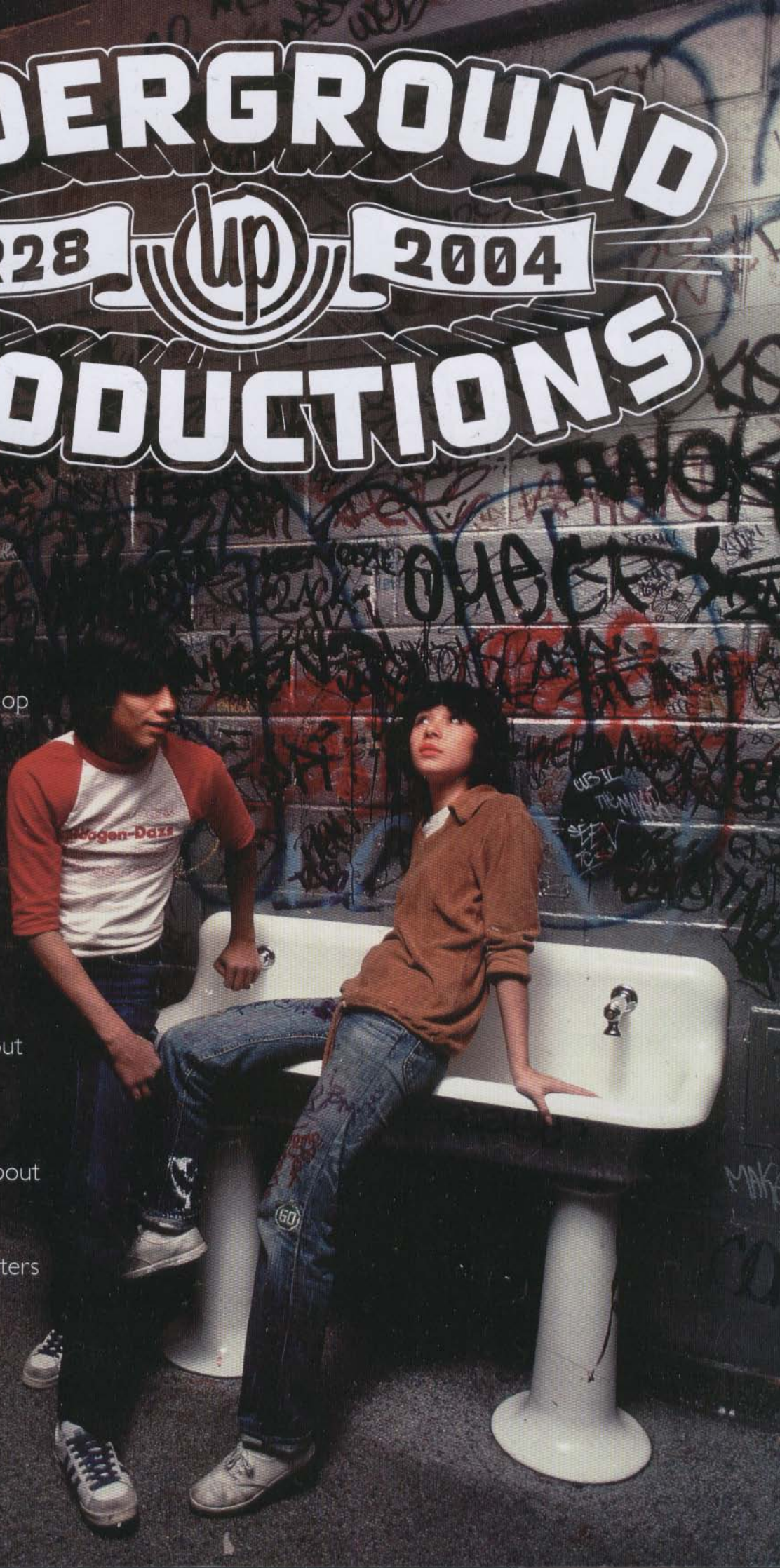
In focus:
Dire & Gorilla



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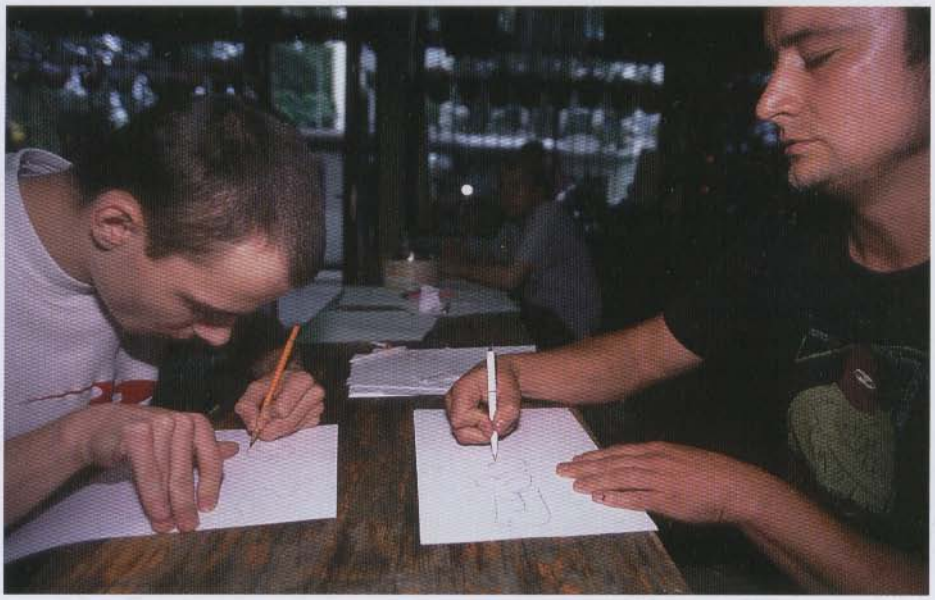

"It's only about the line"

The last Tuesday of every month, the Overkill store in Berlin organizes a style battle. This form of competition was developed by Berlin writers in the early 1990s, and has become increasingly popular in later years.

Tuesday afternoon. It's warm in Kreuzberg. We are sitting at the Bagdad kebab shop by Schlesisches Tor, and **Rew** is talking about the origins of the style battle.

"The rules are simple, and the thought is that you should be able to compete with as little as a pen and paper. Style battles were started here in Berlin in 1992-1993, by writers sitting at home who started competing in graffiti," says Rew. "It came up through the Berlin style obsession. It's only about the line," he underscores. "No color, no background, shading or 3-d. The only important thing is the shape of the letter."

"The ones that got Style battles popular in the last year, and the reason why we have them back, are **Akim** and **Zasd**. They organize a lot of battles during the summers and always outside, with cans."

"As soon as you're under pressure, you're going to do mad whack shit" says Rew. "Competition is important, and for most writers, it's an unusual situation. But you sometimes end up doing something you didn't think you could. You open yourself to a lot of styles."

Rew warns us that it takes a few rounds before you loosen up your hand and mind.

In the Overkill store, a flock of expectant writers aged 15 to 30 has gathered. At four o'clock, benches and tables are produced, and we sit down. We practice different letters and shapes for a while. Adrenaline starts pumping and nervousness spreads. I imagine that this is how breakdancers feel before a competition, or rappers before they take the stage. The feeling is as close to illegal writing as you can get without breaking the law.

It is decided that we should compete on style. The first match is barely a draw, and we newbies find out that two minutes is longer than you might think. **Cake** from Uppsala performs the greatest feat of the tournament by drawing three matches against Rew. A stalemate occurs, and it is decided that the category should be one liners instead. The one liner is a Berlin specialty, and means that the pen must not leave the paper at any point – if it does, you lose. Rew does a masterly one liner and carries on to the final.

A style battle can comprise different categories: tags, throw-ups, style, one liners, combining two different letters, arrows, round tops on letters, alphabet tagging. You are limited only by your imagination.

At Akim and Zasd's style battles the rules are the same as for paper. Sometimes they are organized on a legal wall, and on other occasions the organizers put up plywood boards against a fence.

Competing is nervous work. As Rew predicted, several sketches are far below the competitors' usual standard.

"Cans are better, really," says **Dister**. "Otherwise, this is a good idea. The competitions are sociable events, and attract kids from the neighborhood." Dister and **React** both think the hardest part lies in gauging the time correctly, and achieving good results despite the pressure.

Tobias Barenthin Lindblad

The rules of Style Battle

The style battle is a process of elimination.

Two people compete in each match and all the other participants act as jury when the time is up. It is best to have an even number of participants, optimally 8 or 16. All contestants must stay until the end of the event, and must partake in judging every match except the ones in which they themselves compete.

Each contestant writes his name on a piece of paper that is put in a box.

Each contestant writes two words each on separate papers, which are put in another box. The words should be five letters long at most. Each word is used only once. One can add more words if required.

The different events are either decided beforehand or written down on pieces of paper and placed in a third box.

One person draws the papers from the boxes and acts as timekeeper.

Two names are drawn to compete against each other. The contestants are seated at a table opposite each other.

A word is drawn and read out. The contestants now have two minutes to finish their version of it. The timekeeper announces the time when one minute, 30 seconds and 15 seconds remain.

When the time is up, the pens are put down. All competitors judge the sketches, putting their mark on the one they like best.

In case of a draw, there is a rematch with a new word.

When everyone has gone one match and half the contestants have been eliminated, the next round commences and is organized the same way.

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Screw, Sacer. Situated close to the busy Canal Street in Manhattan, New York March 2004

How to do New York

So you've had your bags searched and your shoes scanned for radioactivity. You've been questioned about the purpose of your trip to New York, how many credit cards you've brought and how much money you have. UP's Graffiti guide to New York has some tips for you that may ease your stay in the Land of the Free.

Kez 5 crossing out SI, Williamsburg Bridge April 2004

Beef

You can quickly discern which active writers don't get along in New York. They'll take any chance to destroy the tags and throw-ups of their enemies. Among the more famous rivalries is MQ's beef with JA, which spread from New York all the way to the West Coast. In the spring of 2004, the prolific SI is caught in the crosswinds. He seems to have a beef with everybody: Skuf, Kez 5 and JA.

Books

There are a few books to recommend for the graffiti nerd to read before leaving for New York. Subway Art (Chalfant/Cooper) and Dondi White (Vitten/White) provide an insight of the subway era in New York 25 years ago. The Art of Getting Over by Stephen Powers takes us from early 70s Philadelphia and "Cornbread" to bombers who are still active today. INY(Burns) depicts modern-day New York, with a focus on stencils, posters and stickers. If you want to see what New York bombers look like, check out the recently-released Autograff, a book of personal (to say the least) portraits of the uncrowned kings of the Big apple. The novel Nov York describes a constantly strung-out writer in downtown Brooklyn, his experiences of graffiti, acid and central booking.

Cans

Nowadays, there are no problems in getting European spray paint brands in New York, though they are quite expensive. The alternative is to use local products. You can get brands like Krylon and Rust-Oleum in most paint and hardware stores, but they too are in the expensive range. Otherwise, Painters Touch, a hobby paint produced by Rust-Oleum, is worth trying. The matt paints are good quality, and above all, they're cheap. Check out the Home Depot store, open 24 hours. For Montana and Molotow, visit All the Right, 35-61 Junction Blvd, Corona Queens, Scrap Yard, 300 West Broadway and Pearl Paint, 308 Canal St.

Painters Touch is an alternative to the more expensive spraycan brands.

Revolt painted at the original Hall Of Fame in Harlem

Drinks

The smog-filled air of New York is conducive to a drink of some kind. A soda or a juice in a deli is cheap. A coffee at Starbucks is cheap too, but tastes like dishwater. Chillin' on the street with a 40 oz bottle of beer is nice, but illegal. Buying a beer in a bar or a club costs about five or six dollars, and tipping is obligatory.

Five Boroughs

New York consists of five areas: Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island. Many are the hip-hop heroes who took their first steps here. Jay-Z comes from the Marcy Projects, Biggie from Bed-Sty (Bedford-Stuyvesant), both in Brooklyn. 50 Cent comes from Jamaica and Beatnuts from Corona, both in Queens. KRS1 comes from south Bronx. Wu Tang Clan come from Staten Island. Taki 183 comes from Washington Heights, Harlem.

Dondi White comes from New Lots, east New York. 149th St – Grand Concourse (lines 2, 4 and 5) in the Bronx housed a Writers' Bench, and the Ghostyard is at 207th St. in Harlem, highest up.

Glass Burn

The corrosive liquid known as Glass Burn is popular in New York. Since it burns into glass, it can't be buffed. It is mainly used on subway windows, but some shop windows are sometimes honoured with a phat, runny tag. It is effective on glass, ceramic tile – and skin.

Halls of Fame

The original Hall of Fame is at 106th St. in Spanish Harlem. It is painted once a year, in June. Only old legends and their friends are allowed to write there.

Check it out, you will no doubt recognize some heroes from Subway Art. If you want to write legally in New York, check out "5 Pointz", (previously known as Phun Phactory), 45-14 Davies St, by Court Sq. on the G line or 45 Court House Sq. on line 7. Please note that some kind of permit is required. Check out www.5ptz.com for more info.

In the Streets

After the MTA declared the subway a graffiti-free zone in the late 80s, the streets are the last recourse for the New York writer. And they keep the scene going. The enormous amount of tags and throw-ups, which dominate the scene, found in New York is impressive to say the least. Writers like Sacer, Earsnot and Fanta from IRAK, Skuf, Kez 5 and Les from YKK/XTC bomb ceaselessly. Also check out writers like JA, Des, 323, Desa, 51, Gen 2, Muk, Oze 108 and Screw, among others.

Letter lines/Number lines

During the subway era, the line you rode could make all the difference between a burner and a throw-up. Number lines were known for color pieces and burners, while letter lines were known for tags and throw-ups. Today, you see neither tags, throw-ups or burners, no matter which line you take.

Museums/Galleries

For the train spotter, the MTA Museum, located at Hoyt-Schermerhorn on lines A, C and G, is worth a visit.

The J, M and Z lines are good places to spot nice rooftops

New York's countless galleries often house graffiti-related exhibitions. Check out the galleries around Soho in Lower Manhattan and Williamsburg in Brooklyn.

Nine Eleven

After the World Trade Center attacks on September 11th 2001, New York lives in a state of constant paranoia. Not a day goes by without the papers reporting new security measures. The amount of police in the subway has increased from 521 in 2001 to 723 in late 2004. Following the Madrid bombings, security measures were increased yet again. All stations abutting bridges or tunnels above and under water are under police supervision. Security cameras have been installed in tunnels, as well as shoebox-sized sensors that analyze the air and sound a silent alarm in the event of terrorists unleashing a bio-chemical attack.

Oldschool Writers

New York is full of them. Tags and throw-ups by writers whose heyday was in the 1970s abound. Stay High 149 and OE are good examples. Some of them are still involved in graffiti through their legal jobs: they work at different jams or advertise graffiti products. There are rumors of older writers still active in the New York subway. You can only salute them and give them the respect they deserve – they are after all the very roots of graffiti.

Police

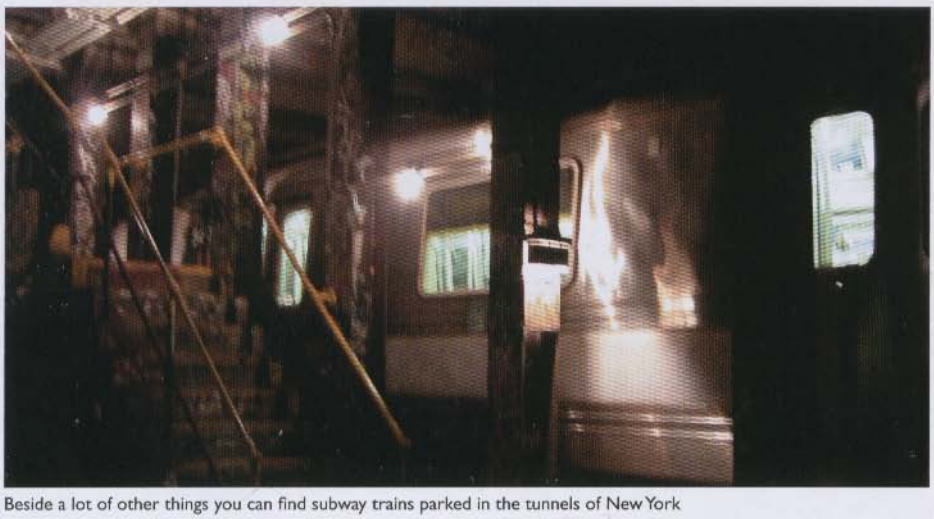
The New York Police Department grows day by day. There are police officers everywhere. However, it is their sheer number that inspires awe rather than their physical manifestation. Many of them correspond perfectly to the American stereotype of the doughnut-munching, portly and uninterested officer who would presumably be unable to run fifty yards. But they are well supported by their plainclothes colleagues, who may be dressed in a suit, as a homeless person or a Rastafarian.

Rooftops

90% of New York rooftops are flat, especiallyin the suburbs along the subway lines, but also in Manhattan. The rooftops are a good means to become visible in New York. In some areas, they are filled with tags and throw-ups. Giant rolled tags are also common. Check out the walls along the J, M and Z lines in Brooklyn, or along line 7 in Queens.

Supercool 223, Ex Vandals, Frank 151 in the Bronx, 2004

There are a lot of policemen in New York



Beside a lot of other things you can find subway trains parked in the tunnels of New York

A painted subway, 2004

Subways

The subway is by far the best way to get around in New York, and also the hottest goal for graffiti tourists. Many are those who have come to the Holy City and left their mark on the subway. Most of them do a few panel pieces, maybe a wholecar, and then go home. New Yorkers themselves, however, do not write much on the subway. "If you do a piece or a few throw-ups on the subway, you become much hotter prey for the Vandal Squad", says a native. "I know that some older writers do the subway sometimes, take a picture, and then paint over it with silver paint."

Tunnels

The subway tunnels of New York are endless. Once you are in them, you can use points andladders to get to other lines and levels. There are emergency exits in almost every tunnel. Some entrances are covered by camera, and emergency exits may have alarm systems on them. Apart from that, the tunnels are full of dirt, rats, Revs, flowpens, trains, tags and throw-ups. Railway workers are also common. They frequently appear in groups of 20 to 30, laboring on the two-work-while-28-watch-and-discuss-baseball principle. Check out the movie Dark Days, a documentary on the so-called "Freedom Tunnels", the Amtrak tunnels along Riverside Drive, West Manhattan, and the people who lived there.

Vandal Squad

The New York Vandal Squad consists of

Skuf dont like the Vandalsquad, Brooklyn 2004

police officers, and most of the more active writers of the city have made their acquaintance. According to one New York writer, it is the subway that means the most to the Vandal Squad. Germans, Frenchmen and Swedes have been caught in their net. Many Europeans who get caught simply take the first plane back home as soon as they are released from custody, without waiting for trial. Rumors abound about the vandal squad's methods when they have arrested someone: they scan the suspect's subway ticket to determine his movements in New York, contact the police in his home town and use all sorts of lies to extract a confession.

Walls

New York has much to offer those with a taste for large color productions. There are huge painted walls across the city, but the Bronx is said to be the most productive borough.

X-large

New York is X-large – often even 5X-large. This pertains to skyscrapers, refrigerators, cars, booties and clothes. If you thought you were hip-hop when you got a size L T-shirt, you now look like a pop string, like Blur or the Beatles. The guys on the corner were born rapping, with a du-rag under their baseball cap and their trouser crotch around their ankles. It doesn't matter if you get killah teeth and sip Cristal. You are a nerd.

Yards

The New York subway system is gigantic. It comprises 468 stations and 28 lines. Every line has its own yard. A yard like the Coney Island one, that shelters the B, F, M and N lines amongst others, is large enough to cope with 1,800 cars. The yard in Far Rockaway Park, in contrast, can take six or seven train sets at most. Some are logically located by the end stations, others are hidden away, and you won't find them without detailed directions. Many yards are enclosed by double fences, which we recognize from Style Wars. No dogs, or wolves, are to be seen.

Zero Tolerance

The "zero tolerance" rule operates in New York. Skateboarding in the subway, drinking alcohol in the street or urinating in public all lead to police intervention. And, we should add, writing graffiti on a wall or a train in New York without a permit is strictly illegal.

Torkel Sjöstrand

Part of the gigantic Coney Island subway yard. It is big enough to hold 1800 subwaycars

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Dire, Gorilla – Stockholm 2004

Tags and throwups come before pieces

Gorilla and Dire first started writing together in 1996. Gorilla had done his first piece three years previously, and Dire discovered graffiti in the late 80s. A year later, they co-founded K-Line Connection (KCN), which is as much a gang of buddies as it is a graffiti crew. KCN quickly gained notoriety on the Stockholm graffiti scene for their colourful wildstyle pieces along the tracks to Kungsängen. Seven years later, both Gorilla and Dire have begun to diminish the frequency of their nocturnal excursions and started cooling it with the arrows.

Why do you write?

Gorilla: Because it's fun. That's true for life as well as graffiti. I don't care about relaying a message or having any reason other than fun.

Dire: We used to do it more for the culture. There were a lot of us doing it, and a strong sense of community. Now I don't see myself as a graffiti writer. It's just a fun thing...

Gorilla: And a habit. I no longer feel that I could die for graffiti, but I haven't stopped looking at tags and pieces. When I started off, I photographed loads of pieces and thought everything was great. Now I hardly think anything is any good. We've been carrying on for so long now, developed our vision of graffiti, and become very demanding. But it's still interesting to look at graffiti, even the ugly stuff.

How has your style developed along with your getting more demanding?

Dire: Earlier, I only wanted to do wildstyle projects, but now I think simple things are nicer to look at.

Gorilla: A tag can often seem a lot better than a whole color piece. A really good tag is tougher to pull off. You can hide a piece in colors and arrows. I don't think I used to think that way. In those days, I didn't see the style in the same way, but probably thought lots of colors were cool.

Dire: The feeling is the most important thing. Tags and throwups come before pieces nowadays. It works the same for graffiti writers as for all artists. As you develop, you simplify, and you like seeing art simplified. It should be easy but right.

Gorilla: I changed my style one year at the Roskilde festival. We were sitting around drinking beer and sketching, and someone was playing a recording of a sketch by [Swedish comedy act] Hassan where they were saying "*grilla, grilla*" ["grill, grill"] all the time. I started sketching the word *grilla* and it became completely different from the style I used when I wrote Disney. It was during the European wave, when all the SDK stuff from France was at its greatest. I added an O, so it spelled Gorilla, and when I returned home, I carried on with it. I couldn't be bothered to do wildstyle nowadays.

You lived near the Hall of Fame in Spånga. What did that mean to you?

Gorilla: I went to school in Spånga, and went to the wall every day in the early 90s. In those days, I just went to look. I felt I wasn't good enough to write there.

Gorilla, Kcn – Stockholm 2004

Dire..

Dire..

..Gorilla – Stockholm 2004

..Gorilla – Stockholm 2004

Gorilla – Stockholm 2004

Asma, Dyre – Stockholm 1999

Dire, Gorilla – Stockholm 2004

Dire: It was a Hall of Fame, just for kings.

Gorilla: Yeah, and I had no fame myself, so I had to practice before I began writing there.

Dire: It was a meeting-place. When you went there, you always met 20 people you knew.

Gorilla: At weekends, it was full of people with tape players barbecuing. There was a completely different respect for the pieces than there is today. Circle's stuff stayed up for ages without anyone touching it. Now someone can do a giant wall, and the next day, it's spitted.

What did the Spånga Fame mean to K-Line's thorough wildstyle productions of the mid-90s?

Gorilla: It certainly meant a lot to us. We were inspired by Circle, Tarik and the others who wrote there before us.

What inspires you today?

Dire: We've done a few projects with several different hues of the same color. The inspiration for those walls partly comes from my starting to paint canvases with a lot of different shades. Then I saw the possibility to use a lot more color than we used to.

What motivates you?

Gorilla: Right now, my motivation isn't what it used to be. Before, I could stay up all night until three, sneak out to some wall by the tracks and do a four-hour piece. Now I don't live for it in the same way, but I still get the urge to bomb.

Dire: That's what I get the urge to do nowadays. I'm no longer drawn towards standing around messing with a wall, but more sketching or painting canvasses.

What's the most important quality in a good writer?

Gorilla: That depends on how you look at it. There are those who might not be so good at writing, but who are real fun to hang around with, so to me, they become good writers.

Dire: You don't just judge the piece, but the personality. If someone's ultra-cool at writing but is a complete jackass, I don't like his stuff.

Gorilla: You might be a good writer because you have tags all over town. Even if they're not so nice, you're good because you bombed the whole city.

Dire: Then you're simply dedicated to graffiti. But it's hard to put your finger on what makes a good writer, since we like so many kinds of graffiti.

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Boogie Nights. Bingo, Punk, Finsta and Lady won the Swedish selection to Write 4 Gold. In the background Röda Sten.

Battle raised temperature of rainy weekend

The Everwanting Streets exhibition brought out the variety of street art and managed to show that graffiti can be really pleasant.

Text: Malcolm Jacobson, Photo: Malcolm Jacobson, Frej Söderberg

This summer, Gothenburg hosted one of the largest exhibitions in Swedish graffiti history, Everwanting Streets, featuring fifty artists. The Meeting of Styles show and Write 4 Gold competition also took place in conjunction with the exhibition.

Everwanting Streets was shown at the Röda Sten arts center, a large brick building at the Gothenburg docks which has lain empty for several years but – without permission – been used by writers who have covered its walls in several layers of paint, without needing to worry overmuch about getting caught: graffiti has not earlier been high on the Gothenburg police's list of priorities. When the building was granted to the Röda Sten cultural association, Gothenburg's writers continued to be allowed free use of the façade. Now, a further step has been taken with the exhibition of this collection, which was selected by **Jonathan "Ollio" Josefsson**, **Pärra "Ruskig" Andreasson** and **Meira D. Ahmemulic Pärra "Ruskig" Andreasson.**

The exhibition brings out the variety of both local and international street art. It is not easy to spot any correlation between **Bates'** burners and **Ashar Khan**'s prayer corner.

Visitors are greeted by **Mr. Mucho**'s large painting, which does not restrict itself to the panels within the entrance. The painting has grown into an installation, and the inclusion of a small tree means it is literally alive. From a cable in the largest room of Röda Sten hangs a cocoon by **Blue**. Visitors to the exhibition are welcome to crawl in and relax on cushions and mattresses. Several graffiti writers seem drawn to the idea of building a home after sneaking around various locations and hastily leaving their signatures there, as similar artworks have previously been displayed both in galleries and "real life".

Everwanting Streets: Swoon

REA Crew have also chosen to take graffiti away from streets and squares. In their battle with **CP** and **Lups** Crews, they furnished and decorated an apartment entirely in graffiti. The Stockholm Transit Authority did the same in their poster campaign of the 1980s, with the caption "Would you like your home to look like this?" While I doubt that REA's homes actually look like this, the message now is that graffiti is something positive.

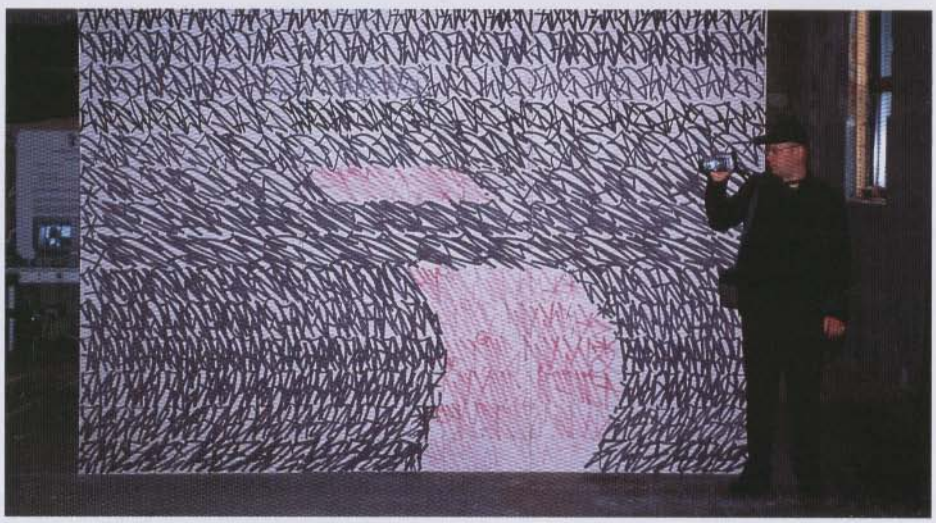
Writers emboldened into proving their toughness by zero tolerance policies have little to fetch here. This exhibition places graffiti in a much broader context than most writers wish to acknowledge. The goal here is to embrace graffiti, to highlight its finer creative aspects and those artists who wish to break through its constraints and communicate with people outside graffiti culture. Since graffiti is still an unaccepted alternative culture, it is open to interpretation and projection; graffiti can be formed according to your own demands, and no institutions exist to define it.

As is usual in graffiti exhibitions, it is those who depart from the traditional language of graffiti, and instead use its attitude in the exploration of new techniques, who most easily adapt to the new environment. This is the case with some of the writers who have branched out into what may be the most

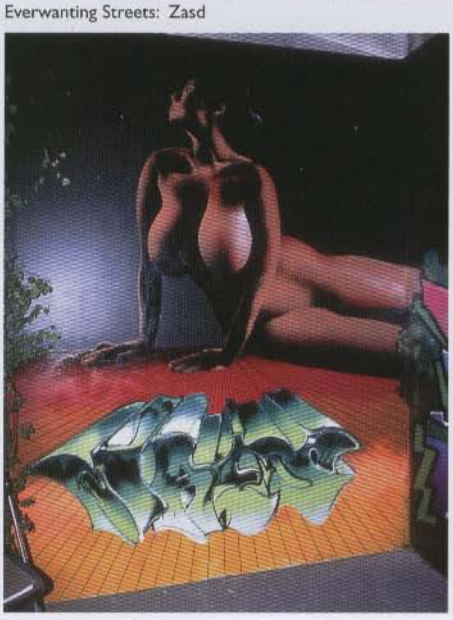
Everwanting Streets: Cocoon by Blue, piece by Desire.

popular medium of contemporary art: film. **Pike** and **Nug** showed their two intense and humorous depictions of a day in the life of a masked writer. In It's So Fresh I Can't Take It, the writer seems to have lost control amid the frenzied bombing. While the can covers a subway station in tags, the writer hangs on like a small child holding on to the leash of a large, happy dog. **Zasd**, in his film, inspires new ways of creating graffiti: like a dancer, he builds his name from his own shadow, as well as that of a swaying saxophone player.

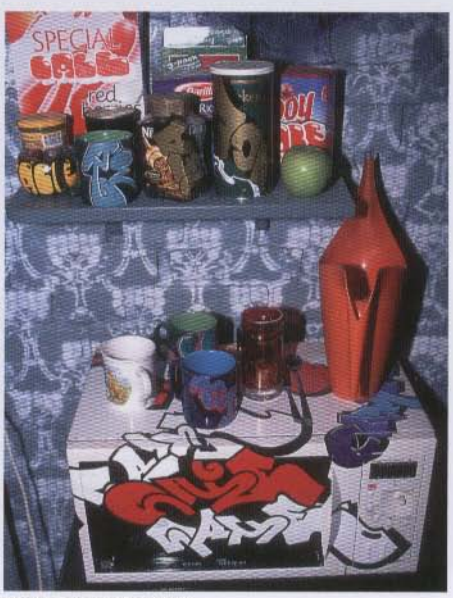
On July 18th, the Meeting of Styles takes place, and the Write 4 Gold competition on the following day. Both events are organized in several European countries. At live graffiti events, watching the pieces slowly taking shape can seem like a drawn-out affair. The days are enlivened by the exchange of small talk both with old and new acquaintances. Several decent pieces are produced on both occasions, but the importance of competition in graffiti is made clear when, despite the relentless rain, results get progressively sharper over the course of the Write 4 Gold battle. Things first get hotter during the tag and throwup events. Visitors gather in a semi-circle on the wet lawn and gravel-covered ground under the Älvsborg Bridge to watch competitors walk to the middle, one by one, carrying themselves with attitude and spraying or writing their letters carelessly or with precision. For a moment, you sense the adrenaline rush that is so important to all those writers who choose locations other than those approved by the authorities.



Everwanting Streets: Zasd



Everwanting Streets: Maes



Everwanting Streets: REA

Meeting Of Styles: 7up, Unknown, Hell

Meeting Of Styles: Gicrew

Meeting Of Styles: Toast, Josh, Möe, Ekaf

Meeting Of Styles: Tiger, F.ups, F.ups

Meeting Of Styles: Ians, Dirte

Everwanting Streets

Next, Skip, Stab, Stif

Everwanting Streets

Everwanting Streets

Everwanting Streets: Gone

Everwanting Streets

Write 4 Gold Gothenburg: Fame

Swedes won European graffiti battle

The Write 4 Gold competition was organized for the second consecutive year this summer. This year the competition was expanded from four German trials to fifteen trials in eleven European countries.

"Write 4 Gold is an experiment in testing possibilities and communications between the European scenes. Our goal is to create an event and an occasion to link up the graffiti scenes of Europe," says **Rene Kästner**, Managing Director of the marketing agency Can't Stop Fanatics, which is behind the event.

Are you organizing the contest for the Montana spray can company?

"No. We are an independent organization. Write 4 Gold is our idea and we have all the rights to the event. Montana is only one of several sponsors. We make no money from Write 4 Gold, but we need funding to cover the costs."

Do you think it is possible to judge different graffiti styles in relation to each other?

"No, but we try our best to make a good judgement. In our system, 70 percent of the contest is made up of style and the whole concept painting. Another 15 percent is throw-ups, 10 percent is sketching and 5 percent is tagging. Style is valued the most because it is the root of all, and what we see as the most important thing in writing."

At the Swedish selections at Röda Sten in Gothenburg, the jury consisted of writers **Kaos**, **Bas 2** and **Kacao 77** from Germany, and **Bates** from Denmark.

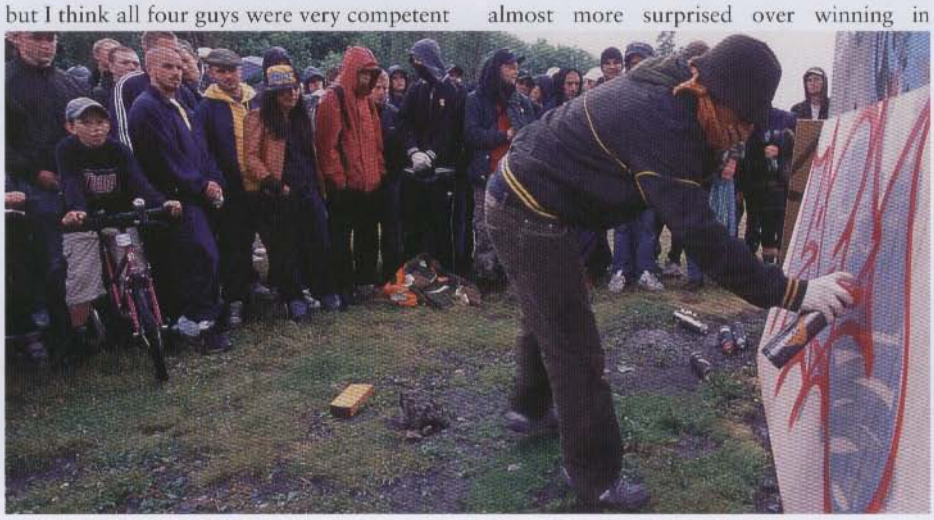
German and Swedish graffiti generally differ quite a lot stylistically. Do you see a problem with a jury consisting of three Germans and a Dane being chosen to judge the Swedish trials?

"Only these guys were available at this day, but I think all four guys were very competent to judge it. Now the winners of the Splash festival in Germany have been announced, and the crew come from Sweden. It means that for our judges, Sweden did the best and most innovative style at the competition. Not Berlin, not Paris, but Sweden!"

Eight Swedish crews took on the challenge in the Swedish trials at Röda Sten in Gothenburg on June 19th. Competition was hard. After a long and rainy day, **Bingo**, **Punk**, **Lady** and **Finsta** won with a humorous interpretation of the theme Boogie Nights. About a month later, they went to the Splash festival in Germany, where they won all events except tagging, where they came third. The victors' prize was 1,400 spray cans.

"The contest was the same at the final as almost more surprised over winning in

René Kästner and the jury



The write 4 Gold competition comprised four events: Concept Painting, Sketching, Throwups and Tagging.

Write 4 Gold Gothenburg: REA

Write 4 Gold Gothenburg: Wiseguys

Write 4 Gold Gothenburg: DtOff

Sweden. We didn't think our simple Swedish style would win the German judges over."

"I was surprised that we won in Germany." adds Punk. "And it feels really cool that we did it without compromising our style. Generally speaking, people seemed to think we were doing something cool and different. When we spoke to the other teams, they wanted to talk about Sweden and Swedish style. I'm proud to have represented team Sweden on this occasion. It doesn't mean we're better writers than anybody else. I see it as a classic battle that Sweden won.

Was there a difference in mood between participants in Sweden and the final?

"We've since understood that some people in Sweden got jealous. After we won the finals, the Poles and Germans immediately came to congratulate us. In Germany, the contest led to you getting to know the other groups a bit. In Sweden, it almost had the reverse effect. I've changed my mind about people I used to think were nice guys after the competition. Even if that was sad, it was pretty good to get to know their true colors," says Bingo.

Are you participating next year?

"We're directly qualified for the final. Since we won the first year that Sweden entered, it might be best to quit while you're ahead. But next year we might really feel like competing. Time will tell."

Björn Almqvist

The winning piece from the European final.

Bingo: "We thought of all the obvious stuff that would appear in the other walls. Then we tried to think of something to beat them. There must be a perfect solution – all we had to do was think of it. The theme was Masters of Style. On the left side of the text, Finsta did a monster racking up toys off the street. On the right side, a monster pushes down the head on a toy so that blood comes out of its mouth. On the wall, he sprays 'writing with toys'. We are the monsters, using toy writers to write with. At the same time, we were dissing the other contestants since we were standing writing with them. A lot of people reacted to the humor in our piece. That could have been decisive in our winning."

Finsta: "Everybody tried to outdo each other in style. But we thought whatever we do, it will be done with style, so we tried to focus on twisting the concept into something cool. We wanted to do a wall with attitude, like an Eminem battle rhyme. When he's done, the opponent got nothing to say."

Throw-up. The word 'write' was given on the spot so that there would be no time to prepare. The conditions were two minutes with two cans and a pinkie cap.

One of the proud winners holding the trophy.

Think you got style? Register for Write 4 Gold 2005, the Global Challenge and check out more photos from this year at www.write4gold.com

The Stuttgart contribution to the final of Write 4 Gold.

Ferm, Talib, Irok – 2004

STOCKHOLM SUBWAY

Ador – 2004

Hte – 2004

Ög – 2004

Whel – 2004

Fame – 2004

Tier – 2004

Nick, Uze – 2004

Ador – 2004

Ida, Fame – 2004

Tier, Que – 2004

Rebok – 2004

Uze – 2004

Hook – 2003

Gets - 2004

STOCKHOLM COMMUTER

Seom, Jues – 2004

Whel – 2004

Whel, Y2k, Hype – 2004

Dance, Hook – 2003

Embell, Adone, Ög – 2004

Vim, Nso, Bel – 2004

Cae, Renks, Banos, Trix – 2004

Näu, 2004

SWEDISH TRAINS

Vifl – Itinotrain, 2004

Inas – Kustpilentrain, 2004

Com – 2004

Rise – GL Reginatrain, 2004

Ifs – Intercitytrain, 2004

Pix – freighttrain, 2004

Myndigheterna slår tillbaka

I maj 2003 knackade det på dörren hemma hos 19-åriga Frej i Lidköping. Efter fyrtio dagar i häkte dömdes Frej till åtta månaders fängelse och över 100 000 kronor i böter.

Den lilla staden Lidköping vid Vänern njuter av vintersolen. Innerstadens låga trähus lutar sig mot varandra. Snön smälter sakta i parkerna och de första vårtecknen börja märkas. I denna sagoboksstad försökte Frej och hans vänner återskapa en av de mest urbana ungdomskulturerna som finns.

Det är lätt att få syn på honom på stationen. Färgfläckad anorak, Nike Airforceskor med färg på och mjukisbyxor. Med sin skepparkrans och sin korta snagg påminner Frej mest av allt om en björn, en björn med lite sorgsna ögon. Frej talar uppblandad norrländska och är lugn och eftertänksam. Men man anar också ett stort allvar och ilska hos honom.

Frej bor i en gammal träkåk. Det är stiligt inrett. Mörkrött i vardagsrummet, blått i sovrummet. Stora krukväxter, teve, och ett par hyllor med ett imponerande filmbibliotek.

Vi åker och fotar en tag av Frej, en av de sista som är kvar. Vi besöker också Frejs ateljé. Tavlorna är målade med olja och föreställer ofta människor. Men det finns ett krypande obehag i bilderna, något mörkt under ytan. Frej säger att det bilderna är ett sätt att bearbeta det han har varit med om.

Frej fascinerades av graffiti redan som ung i hemstaden Kiruna. Han prövade att tagga lite, men det var först när han flyttade till Lidköping som intresset tog fart.

– Jag ville bli bra på att tagga, och på att måla. Det var en jävla tjusning med målandet, vem är det där, vem har gjort det här. Jag satt hemma och skissade och planerade att bli känd, fnissar Frej. Vi började måla en massa och tyckte det var skithäftigt. Vi filmade när vi målade och kollade på det efteråt, det var en kick. Sedan skrev tidningarna: 'Nu har de klottrat i Lidköping' på förstasidan. Bingo!

"Jag skrev fortfarande Aze och med filmen kunde de koppla ihop Aze med mig."

Vad tänkte du när du såg tidningsartiklarna?

– Jag tänkte att jag vill synas. Och att jag vill synas för det jag har gjort.

Hur många pieces gjorde du under de här åren?

– Det har jag ingen uppfattning om, några hundra kanske.

Har du åkt fast någon gång tidigare?

– Ja. Vi var på en demonstration i Stockholm, 18/8 hette den. Vi filmade varandra när vi skrev politiska slagord och tags. Vi var maskerade, men gick ur ledet för att lägga ner kameran. Då tog dom oss. Vi fick sitta i arresten i sex timmar.

Frej suckar och funderar en stund innan han tar sats och fortsätter.

– Jag var rädd för det var första gången jag satt i arrest. Det kom in en snut och sa: 'Du är värdelös. Du är fan det värsta som finns'. Sen såg han att jag var rädd. 'Är du rädd? Fan va gött!' Jag sa bara 'inga kommentarer'. Vi blev släppta och sen hände inget mer.

Filmen beslagtogs och Frej tror att den så småningom skickades till Lidköpingspolisen.

Var det filmen som gjorde att de beslutade sig för att häkta dig?

– Det var nog mycket på grund av den. Jag skrev fortfarande Aze och med filmen kunde de koppla ihop Aze med mig. De hade indicier och tyckte att de hade underlag för att sätta dit mig. Och sen bombade vi jävligt mycket. Vi åkte runt med bil och målade. Vi var runt i Skaraborgsområdet, från Falköping till Skövde. Säkert fyra gånger i veckan.

Vad var det för ställen ni målade på?

– Vi målade väggar och lite tåg.

Frej målade hela våren 2003.

– En morgon knackar det på dörren. Jag hade varit ute och bombat sent på natten. Yrvaken reser jag mig och öppnar. Då slits dör-

ren upp. Det är polisen! 'Husrannsakan!'

Polisen letar igenom Frejs lägenhet och Frej körs till polishuset och sätts i arrest. Han blir förhörd men vägrar uttala sig. Han anhålls skäligen misstänkt för grov skadegörelse. Frejs kompis grips samma morgon och anhålls också. Även hos honom gör polisen husrannsakan. Frej blir tilldelad advokat. I två dagar sitter han i arresten tills häktesförhandlingen är avklarad. Frej häktas med nästan fulla restriktioner som varar häktestiden ut. Restriktionerna innebär bland annat att han inte får ringa några samtal. De innebär också att han inte får träffa några andra interner. Frej är i det närmaste totalt isolerad.

– Jag skjutsades till häktet i Mariestad senare på kvällen. Där fanns teve och radio och jag fick snusa. Min morsa var orolig som fan. Jag fick prata med henne först sista veckan.

– Jag var misstänkt för grov skadegörelse, förberedelse till grov skadegörelse, skadegörelse och häleri och stöld.

Häktningstiden varar totalt 38 dagar. Rättegången påbörjas direkt efteråt och pågår i två dagar.

- Under rättegången fick jag inte ens hälsa på någon. Man ser sin morsa gå där och man får inte. Det går inte att förklara. Och min flickvän saknade jag väldigt mycket. Det var det värsta.

Frej blir tyst en lång stund och ser trött ut.

Vad berättade du för din advokat?

– Jag erkände aldrig något för honom. Jag sa 'om det skulle ha varit jag' och gick runt ämnet.

Hur uppfattade du din advokat som person?

– Riktigt kall jävel alltså. Han har sett såna som mig så många gånger. För honom var det som vilken annan dag som helst. Det viktigaste är att skaffa en advokat som är bra i bevisföring. Silbersky är lugnt bäst i Sverige i bevisföring tror jag, säger Frej.

Frej tar fram häktesreglementet, två tummade och vikta A4-sidor.

– Jag fick den här lappen första dan. I häktet väcks man vid halvåtta, på tio minuter ska man klä sig och bädda sängen och så kommer frukosten. Det finns olika saker att göra. Promenera i en rastgård där man bara ser himlen, till exempel. Varannan dag får man duscha, det går att jobba. På biblioteket kan man att låna böcker, men de kommer bara varannan vecka. Varannan dag finns det träningsmöjligheter. Och allt beror på restriktionerna. Jag fick göra det mesta, men ensam. Det fanns ett fritidsrum med filmer och tevespel.

Visste du på en gång hur du skulle bete dig i häktet?

– Ja, jag var medveten om att jag inte skulle medverka till förhör eller göra nånting för att underlätta polisens jobb. Vad de än säger, det bästa är att hålla käft.

Frej blev inte förhörd så många gånger, enligt honom själv för att polisen snart insåg att han inte skulle säga något.

Frej drar med foten längs soffbordet och funderar ett slag.

– Man är så underlägsen och blir jättetrevlig och snäll, för man är lite nojig att de ska komma in i cellen och... Vad som helst.

Hände nåt sånt någon gång?

– Nej. Jag hade tur och kom till Mariestad som är ett litet häkte med trevliga plitar. Men det finns oskrivna regler; Man får till exempel inte snacka med en plit i mer än två minuter för det ser dåligt ut inför de andra internerna. Men nu träffade jag inte nån annan intern så det spelade ingen roll. Jag snackade med en plit som kom in i cellen ibland. Vi kunde prata om vad som helst. Plitarna var rätt chockade för min förundersökning är ju så stor och de undrade vad jag hade gjort? Mördat nån? De trodde inte jag hade klottrat.

"Jag hörde andra som flippade ur i cellerna. Det var en som skrek, helt galen, bankade på dörren. Jag hörde plitarna springa. Jag var jävligt rädd för att bli galen i början."

– Det bästa var när jag fick brev, för det var den enda tillåtna kommunikationen. Jag fick skriva och ta emot brev. Men alla brev som kom var genomlästa, och det tog typ två veckor för åklagaren att gå igenom breven för att se att jag inte kommunicerar om förundersökningen.

Bröt du ihop någon gång i häktet?

– Nä! säger Frej tvärsäkert. Men det var högsommar, advokaten var ute och seglade båt. Hultsfred och Roskilde. Så jag var ju ledsen ... Jag hörde andra som flippade ur i cellerna. Det var en som skrek, helt galen, bankade på dörren. Jag hörde plitarna springa. Jag var jävligt rädd för att bli galen i början. Men jag hade teve så jag kollade mycket på den. Sedan tränade jag för att slappna av. Det är bra att lägga pussel eller att skriva. Hjärnan måste aktiveras. Det dummaste man kan göra är att vara på rummet och skita i allt. Då blir allt mycket värre. I arresten är det värst. Det är ju bara en fyllecell med en plastbänk och servettlakan. Jag sparade frukten för att jonglera med, så att man fick nåt ball.

Är du duktig nu?

– Ja nu är jag grym, skrattar Frej. Man kan rista in saker. I häkten och arrester är det mycket klotter och då kan man läsa och skriva nytt. Jag tog en plastkniv och slipade ner den. Jag ristade in mitt namn och bockade av dagarna med kryss.

Fick du ha skrivpapper och pennor?

- Mm.

Går de igenom sånt?

- Ja. Jag tror att de kan ha haft visitation när jag var ute.

Frej valde att plugga istället för att jobba.

– Jag fick redovisa böckerna. Tio spänn i timmen fick jag, men då räknade de inte alla timmar. Det finns möjlighet att göra geografiprov och liknande på dator, då får man också pengar. Och pengar behövs för att kunna handla i kiosken. Fan vad jag köpte trisslotter.

Vann du ?

– Ja, 50 kronor en gång. Men jag gjorde ju av med typ tre-fyrahundra spänn.

Hur tänkte du när det gått tio, tjugo, trettio dar?

– Efter två veckor var det häktesförhandling och jag omhäktades. Då tänkte jag, 'shit alltså, inte tre veckor till'. En häktning är två veckor, men det är egentligen tre eftersom åklagaren har en vecka för att förebereda sig. Och tre veckor till är en evighet. En dag i häkte är som en vecka i fängelse säger Frej och lägger in en ny snus.

– Snuset är min enda last. Det var därför jag klarade mig så bra i häktet.

I rättegången förhördes Frej av både åklagare och sin advokat. Han hävdade att Aze är ett crewnamn och att det inte fanns något som bevisade att han hade gjort alla målningar och tags. Under husrannsakan hade polisen beslagtagit bland annat graffititidningar, filmer, skisser, foton, kläder, en kökshandduk, en kameraväska, sprayfärg och Frejs dator. Ur datorn plockade polisens tekniker fram flera hundra sidor chat. Även på Frejs arbetsplats gjorde polisen beslag. I rättegången hävdade Frej att hans lägenhet var som ett öppet hus och att hans vänner förvarat sina saker hos honom. Men det hjälpte inte.

– De fällde mig på indicier. Indicier innebär att de tror. 'Vi tror att Frej... Vi säger att det är så här... Med tanke på att dessa bevis fanns hemma hos honom tyder det på att...'

Vad sa din försvarsadvokat?

– Han sa att det inte finns någon möjlighet att jag har gjort det här. Han styrkte att Aze kan vara ett crew och att en del anmälningar var gjorda då jag inte hade varit i stan. Han försökte knäcka indiciekedjan.

Lyckades han frikänna dig på någon punkt?

– Ja, från häleri och stöld. Åklagaren menade att jag hade snott ett par väskor från min skola, men jag hade glömt kvar dem hemma

efter att jag hade slutat skolan.

Efter två dagars rättegång släpptes Frej på fri fot. Domen blev åtta månaders fängelse, och över 100 000 kronor i böter, solidariskt med kamraten. De åtta månaderna i fängelse blev omvandlade till samhällstjänst i 180 timmar. Frej fick ett påverkansprogram att gå igenom i frivården. Dessutom övervakning i ett år och skyddstillsyn tre år.

Frej orkade inte överklaga till hovrätten, han var för rädd att få fängelse.

Hur kändes det när du kom ut?

– Jag grät av lycka! Det var nåt av det grymmaste jag varit med om! Jag tänkte mycket på det här att sitta inne, hur ska det se ut, vad tänker morsan. Men min familj har varit så stöttande, jag älskar dom över allt annat. Det var mycket på grund av deras stöd jag klarade mig.

Men allt är inte avslutat. Ytterligare en rättegång ska hållas, och då gäller det ytterligare fall av skadegörelse som Frej står anklagad för. Frej själv tror att han kommer att få 400 000 kronor till i böter.

Har du funderat över vad som gjorde att du orkade med att sitta i häktet så länge?

– Att jag inte knarkar, att jag inte dricker så mycket. Det var en kick att klara av det. De har försökt att tortera mig och jag har kommit ut och hållit käft! Jag tycker att det är starkt.

Hur länge satt din kompis i häkte?

– Han satt bara två dagar i arrest.

Tänker du mycket på häktningstiden?

– Jag försöker förtränga det, men det kommer tillbaks. Jag tänker på hur skön den första veckan i frihet var. Jag tänker att jag inte vill tillbaka. Det är värt att få uttrycka sig, men inte att sitta häktad. Det går inte att beskriva hur sjukt det är. Jag fattar inte riktigt alla som ska vara hardcore och målar vidare när de har suttit inne. Det är ingen jävla lek!

"Jag var misstänkt för grov skadegörelse, förberedelse till grov skadegörelse, skadegörelse och häleri och stöld."

Har det påverkat dig som person?

– Jag är starkare i mig själv. Man får se det som en erfarenhet, som jag i och för sig gärna hade varit utan. Jag är starkare men räddare. Rädd för lagen. Rädd för att om jag går mot röd gubbe ska de suga in mig. Jag går till psykolog nu, så jag har ju inte mått bra av det.

Hur ser din vardag ut sedan du kom ut?

– Innan kretsade allt kring graffiti. Allt jag tänkte på var graffiti. Det har jag förlorat och det är jävligt hemskt för det var den bästa tiden jag nånsin haft. Graffiti är underbart, att bara kunna gå ut och måla, få synas. Även om jag fortfarande brinner för graffiti så får jag ta olja som medium.

Är det skillnad på att måla graffiti och med olja?

– Ja. När jag målade graffiti var det rytm och bokstäver. Graffiti är mer direkt. Det är kul att måla olja. Men jag får inte hänga ut i gallerier och jag vill visa mina tavlor. Jag vill synas! När jag målade graffiti såg ju alla.

Jo, nog syntes Frej i Lidköping. Han bombade mycket, och de små trähusen i Lidköping fick stora spraytags på fasaderna. Jag undrar varför Frej taggade så brutalt, stans andra målare måste ju ha lagt märke till honom även om han gjort mer diskreta tags och pieces.

– Men vi ville ju hamna i UP, det är varenda målares önskan. Det behöver inte vara UP, men man vill synas. Man vill vara bland de största, och det är stor konkurrens. Men när jag tänker på hur mycket vi bombade i den här lilla staden så tycker jag det är korkat! Här är man känd.

Varför reagerade rättsystemet så hårt mot dig?

– Lidköping är en liten stad. Det gör att det blir en stor frustration. Alla husägare blir skitarga, går ihop och kräver ett slags ... De vill ha hämnd.

Var det någonting du tänkte på när du målade?

– Man tänkte att torskar jag så får jag kanske tiotusen, inte mer. Jag tänkte aldrig att jag skulle hamna i häkte.

Ångrar du något?

– Jag skulle inte ha chattat! Jag skulle inte ha haft så mycket grejer hemma! Sen är det lugnt, bara man klarar att sitta. Och har man tagit de här åtgärderna kommer man inte att sitta i häkte för då finns det ingen anledning

att häkta.

Frej säger att mycket av hans målande var en provokation. Det var ett sätt att uttrycka ilska över nolltoleranspolitik och att vuxna ignorerar ungdomars behov. Graffiti är en ungdomsrevolution mot vuxenvärlden menar Frej. Ilskan finns kvar. Och hämndtankarna. Men den bästa hämnden är att lyckas bli någon, säger Frej.

Vad har hänt med de andra målarna i Lidköping efter att du har haft din rättegång?

– De vågar inte ens måla väggar här. Straffet har ju funkat eftersom det har skrämt många. Jag hade gärna målat mer för att visa att det inte funkar med såna här straff, men det gör det tyvärr. Men det är klart, blir man avrättad om man går mot röd gubbe så gör man inte det. Men det måste ju vara relevans i straffskalan.

Har du målat sen du har kommit ut?

– Ja. Jag har målat lagligt några gånger, jävlar vad jag har varit rädd.

Vad gör du om tio år?

– Jag vill måla. Jag vill måla graffiti och måla olja och jag vill hålla på med konst överhuvudtaget. Det är viktigt att vara kreativ.

Varför är det viktigt?

– Därför att man mår bra av det. Alla vill synas.

Kan du se något positivt med din erfarenhet?

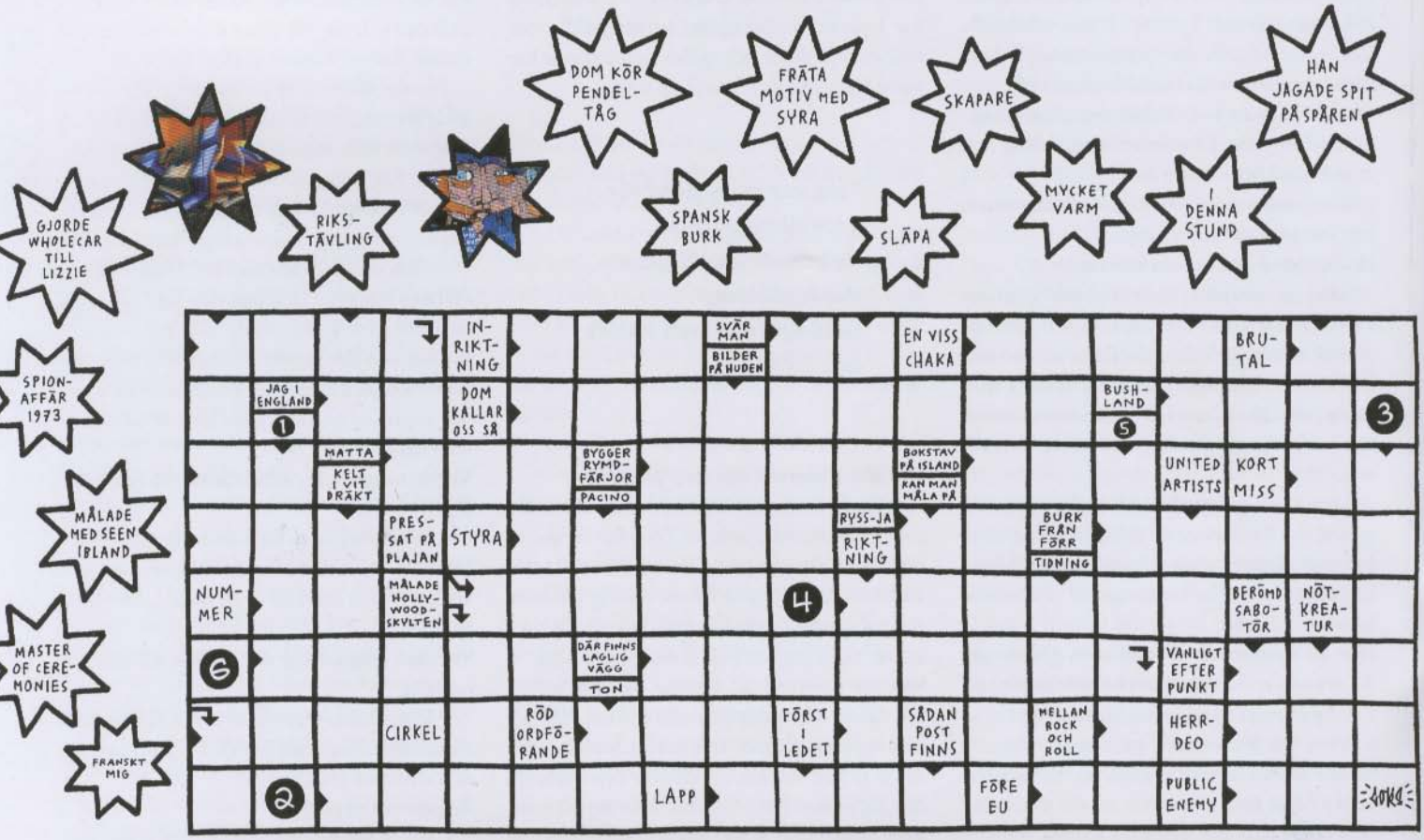
– Nånting bra med det här? Jag får vara med i UP nu! Nej, allvarligt, förr har jag inte velat utge mig för att vara målare. Nu får jag berätta om graffiti, om mina erfarenheter, argumentera för graffitin. Det är schysst att få träffa folk och få en reaktion på min historia, att de tappar andan när de hör det. Det värsta är att jag har blivit känd för torsken mer än för det jag målat. Det är väl priset man får betala. Men det har ändå varit de bästa åren i mitt liv. Jag ångrar inget.

Tobias Barenthin Lindblad

Den som är intresserad av att läsa Frejs förundersökning och dom kan beställa den hos Lidköpings tingsrätt. Domnumret är K 75088-03. Totalt omfattar den ca 1300 sidor.

Testa dina graffitikunskaper!

Core har gjort ett korsord speciellt för UPs läsare. Första november lottar vi ut en UP-tröja (valfri ur vår shop) bland dem som har skickat in lösningen. Adressen hittar du på sid 3, skicka det ifyllda korsordet utklippt, kopierat eller som jpeg med mail. Lösningen kommer sedan publiceras på www.underground-productions.se.



Hfu – Gävle, 2004

SWEDISH WALLS

Besk – 2004

Cunt, Bong – Gävle, 2004

Kast – Malmö, 2004

Afrika, Voyeur – Linköping, 2004

Afrika – Norrköping, 2004

Fiol, Fri – Gävle, 2004

Pub, Character by Gauge, Jeks – 2004

Ador, Woman – 2004

STOCKHOLM WALLS

Hfr, Hgn – 2004

Beor – 2004

Blased, Safe – 2004

Style – 2004

Sea – 2004

Etc – 2004

Gree – 2004

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Ord, Bier, Jama, Trc – 2004

SCANIA

Ofly, Jama – 2004

Zion – 2004

Fem, Fool, characters by Leon – 2004

Moor – 2004

Deko, Acs, unknown, Ord – 2004

Jama, Ofly, Ord – 2004

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F.ups and Igs painting a tram in Gothenburg, 2004

GOTHENBURG TRAINS

Igss – 2004

Ment – 2004

F.ups – 2004

Hte – 2004

F.ups – 2004

Jinx – 2004

Igs – 2004

Blume – 2004

Ail – 2004

Saek – 2004

Doom – 2004

GOTHENBURG WALLS

Jinx – 2004

Ser – 2004

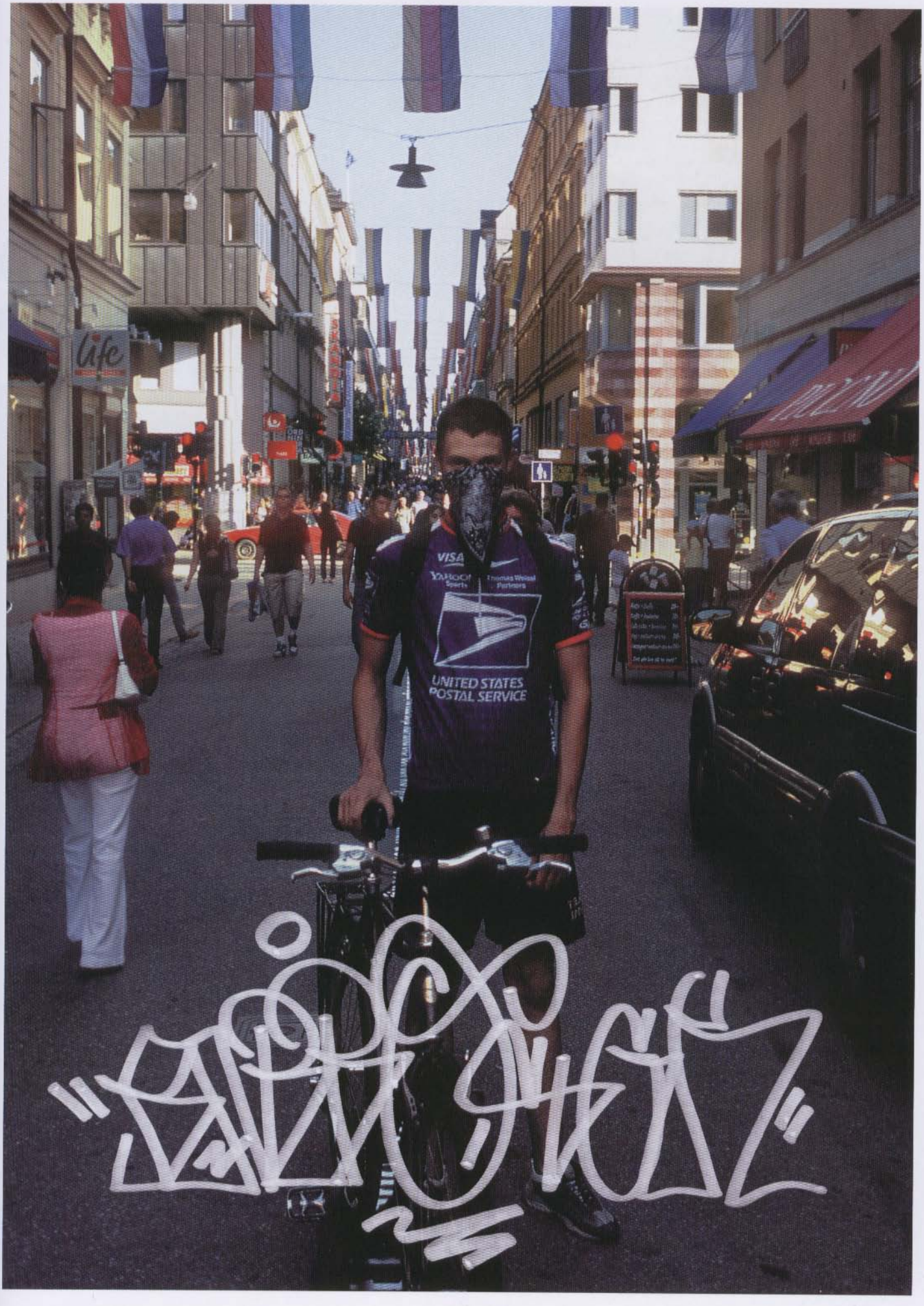
Kce – 2004

Gm,Aero – 2004

Bingo, Saek – 2004

Photograff
Stockholm City graffiti writers

Photo: Torkel Sjöstrand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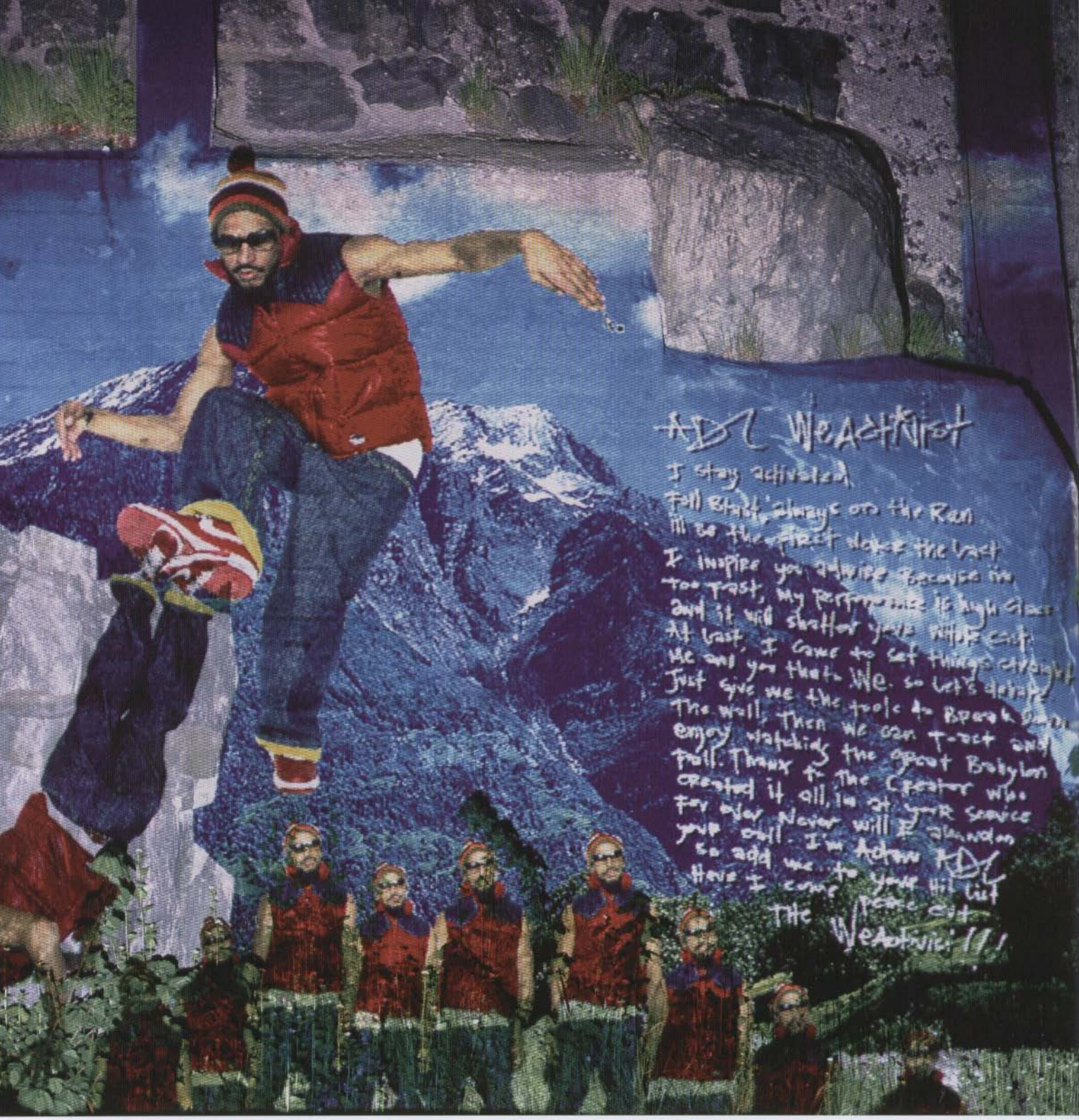
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I stay activated
Fall Back, always on the Run
I'll be the activist shaker the last
I inspire you, admire because I'm
Too fresh, my performance is high class
And it will shatter your whole cast
At last, I came to set things straight
Just give me the tools to Break
The wall, Then we can T-act and
enjoy watching the great Babylon
Fall. Thanx to The Creator who
created it all, I'm at your service
For ever Never will I abandon
your call. I'm Adrian
So add me to your Hit list
Here I come Peace out
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Dondi's bedroom – Lovin 2, Slave, Mr. Jay, and Gli 167 hanging out.

The godmother of Hip Hop

In 1979 there was no such thing as Hip-Hop, but there were plenty of children and youths writing graffiti, breakdancing and rapping. Photographer Martha Cooper was interested in what kids were doing when their parents weren't watching. One day, a young boy named Edwin asked her, "Why don't you take pictures of graffiti?"

Photo: Martha Cooper, interviews: Zeb.Roc.Ski

Martha Cooper wrote the book Subway Art together with Henry Chalfant, and was in great part responsible for spreading graffiti worldwide. The thin volume only contained a small number of her pictures. Now Zeb.Roc.Ski is presenting the 240-page book Hip-Hop Files, featuring masses of pictures of the birth of Hip-Hop, exhaustively commented by Martha Cooper, writers, b-boys, rappers and DJs. We here with publish some extracts from the book.

Meeting a graffiti king

Brooklyn October 1979

Duro: We first learned about Marty when we saw this newspaper article. Dondi (CIA) aka Naco aka NC and Hurst (TOP) aka OI had painted some throw-ups on the wall behind this kid on a homemade swing. We read that the photographer's name was Martha Cooper.

Martha Cooper: I was working as a staff photographer for the *New York Post*. On my way back to the paper, to leave in my film every day, I liked to drive through Alphabet City – Avenues A, B, C, D – and take pictures to finish off the roll of film in the camera. I was interested in what kids were doing when their parents weren't watching. They were pretending to cook, they had toy guns, and they had little playhouses. Since I used to drive

"Marty truly understood us and she knew how important it was to document the movement", Duro

through the same neighborhood every day, the kids recognized me. One day, a young boy named Edwin asked me, "Why don't you take pictures of graffiti?"

He showed me his little notebook with a drawing in it and then showed me how he'd painted it on a wall. I was fascinated because I couldn't believe he had actually designed this piece. That was the first time I ever thought about photographing graffiti. You have to understand that when people looked at the trains, nobody really understood what those letters were. They thought they were dirty words. Even if you could read the letters, they didn't make sense. Like Duro – who would know what that meant? That picture of Edwin was my first picture of graffiti. Edwin asked if I wanted to meet a king and said that he knew Dondi. So we got in my car and he directed me to Dondi's house in the East New York section of Brooklyn, not far from the end of the subway line. When we got there, I introduced myself, and Dondi pulled out his piecebook and showed me this newspaper clipping from the *Post* pasted inside the front cover. It showed an NC (CIA) throw-up on a wall in the background of one of my photos with a credit, "Photo by Martha Cooper." I had taken this picture because of the girl playing on the rope swing in front of the wall. He was like, "Wow! You're Martha Cooper!" It was an amazing coincidence.

So my introduction went perfectly because Dondi could see that I was a real photographer who might be able to get his work published.

Duro: I remember us speaking to each other about not trusting her because of the rumors that were going around about the Transit Squad wanting us really badly. But if she really was a reporter, we were going to be in the newspaper. Wow! Some fame at last.

Marty turned out to be just like one of the guys to us. We began to teach her all about writing and the history behind our art. Even though she was white and a girl, too, she had this personality that somehow we trusted her. She was likeable and sweet. She made us feel comfortable.

Marty interviewing Dondi. From left to right: Duro (CIA), Martha Cooper, Flint (TOP, CIA), Bev 167 (Dondi's girlfriend), Dondi (CIA), and Pi 137 (TOP). Photo by Susan Welchman

Blackbook session

Brooklyn January 1980

Daze: Basically, after I met Dondi and used to go out to Brooklyn, this is all we used to do – smoke cheeba in his bedroom, do outlines, look at photos, listen to music, and just kind of chill before we would walk over to the 2 yard. On any given day, it could be these guys or it could be me or Duro, Kist, Kid 56, Kel, Mare, or any of the CIA crew. I went with Dondi to the 2 yard on maybe six or seven occasions. Any time was good for him – middle of the day, Sunday morning, nighttime, whenever. He just went there. It was like his backyard.

Martha Cooper: What really drew me in was seeing Dondi and his friends hanging out for hours drawing pieces, making lists of the colors they needed, getting the paint, going to the yards, and painting the piece on the train. I thought this was totally amazing because I had assumed that it was just random. Suddenly, it was like a foreign language becoming clear to me. Then I was completely hooked.

Duro: To me, the colors are as important as the style of the letters. Writers always talk about style, but style to me is more than just letters. It's about the arrows, colors, designs, the flow of the letters, the 3-D, and shadow. It's like if you're a dancer and you have a broken leg, you're not able to dance good. To battle, if you want to come out the winner, you got to burn the line.

In the New Lots Yard

October 1981

Duro: This was Martha's second trip to the yard. That night, Shy and Min (RTW) joined me. On our way to Marty's house, I smoked dust for the first time. When we got there, I got sick and threw up. We left Marty's house, got into her car, and drove to the Utica Avenue lay-up. When we arrived there, we headed to the hatch. I was still feeling a little sick from the dust, but already getting high on weed and beer again.

We spent an hour walking around both levels of the lay-up only to find that there weren't any trains. At one point, we walked to the end of this one lane and found a wall that was devoid of graffiti except for some really old Cliff, Mickey 729, and Dino (NOD) of the Ex Vandals. Since those were the only tags on that wall, we figured we were the only other writers that had taken the time to travel to this remote spot in the underground lay-up. With no trains there, we decided to go to the New Lots yard. As we were going back to Martha's car, she was taking pictures of us as we were walking, right there in the middle of Eastern Parkway. People were looking at us all weird and shit. Here we were with three shopping bags full of paint and a white woman with her expensive camera equipment. The whole thing was a little scary because this was one of the worst neighborhoods in Brooklyn at that time. I was well aware that anything could have happened that night, although I told Martha it was cool. Marty, by then, was like a bro.

First contact with breaking

Manhattan January 21 / 1980

Martha Cooper: The night of January 21, 1980, I was on the staff of the *New York Post* and the photo editor sent me up to Washington Heights because they heard on the police radio that there was a riot. When I got there, about 25 little boys, all very young, were sitting inside the police station in the subway. The police had confiscated weapons, markers, and other stuff. It turned out there wasn't really a riot so the cops let them go. They said, "Why don't you explain to the lady what you were doing?"

One kid described a kind of dance where they spun on their backs and their heads and said that they battled each other for their T-shirts. After the cops released the kids, I asked for a demonstration and they showed me different moves right outside the police station. I thought this was a great story, so I called the *Post* editors and said, "They weren't having a riot, they were having a dance contest." But the *Post* didn't like the idea. No riot, no story.

Where da b-boys at?

Manhattan fall 1980

Martha Cooper : The dance the kids showed me was so interesting that I wanted to shoot a story about it. I contacted Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, a folklorist and professor in the performance studies department at New York University, and she suggested I contact Sally Banes, a dance writer and historian.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: Sally Banes was studying for her Ph.D. in performance studies at NYU and writing about dance for

Duro and Shy preparing cans and caps inside the subway car.

Members of the High Times Crew demonstrating breaking right outside the New York City Transit Police station after being arrested for rioting.

the *SoHo News*. She was an astute observer of contemporary culture and interested in dance wherever she found it. She understood the artfulness of breaking right away. She is also a fine writer and great person. Marty always says she takes the pictures, someone else has to do the writing, so I thought they would make a great pair.

Martha Cooper: Sally and I went back to the area where I had first seen the kids and we tried to track them down. I had their names and phone numbers. Almost a year after I had taken my first pictures of breaking, we finally found the kids, but they said, "We're not doing this anymore. After we got arrested, our parents got angry. Breaking was last year, now we're into roller disco."*

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: Ethnology professor Barbro Klein and I worked closely together on a series of conferences dedicated to folklore in New York City. That is, to the creativity of everyday life in the city, especially at the time when the city was on the verge of bankruptcy. Grassroots responses were amazing and we were out on the streets to see what was happening with graffiti, community gardens, casitas, sidewalk altars, street performance, and the many other ways that ordinary people living under difficult conditions made the city habitable.

We were interested not only in old traditions, but also in emerging ones and youth culture turned out to be so vibrant, so creative, and so interesting in the way that it engaged the city through the subway lines, the rolling canvas of the trains, and the stations as a kind of amphitheater for performance. We used the series of conferences to bring everyone together to explore and celebrate the extraordinary creativity of ordinary people – not the famous artists, the wealthy, the powerful – in New York City. At the time,

"We're not fighing – we're just dancing!" High Times Crew

breaking and the emerging Hip Hop culture of which it was a part exemplified this creativity at a distinct historical moment for a particular generation of young New Yorkers.

* "A Reporter's Story", *Folklife Annual*, 1986

Hip Hop goes Down Town
Manhattan 1981

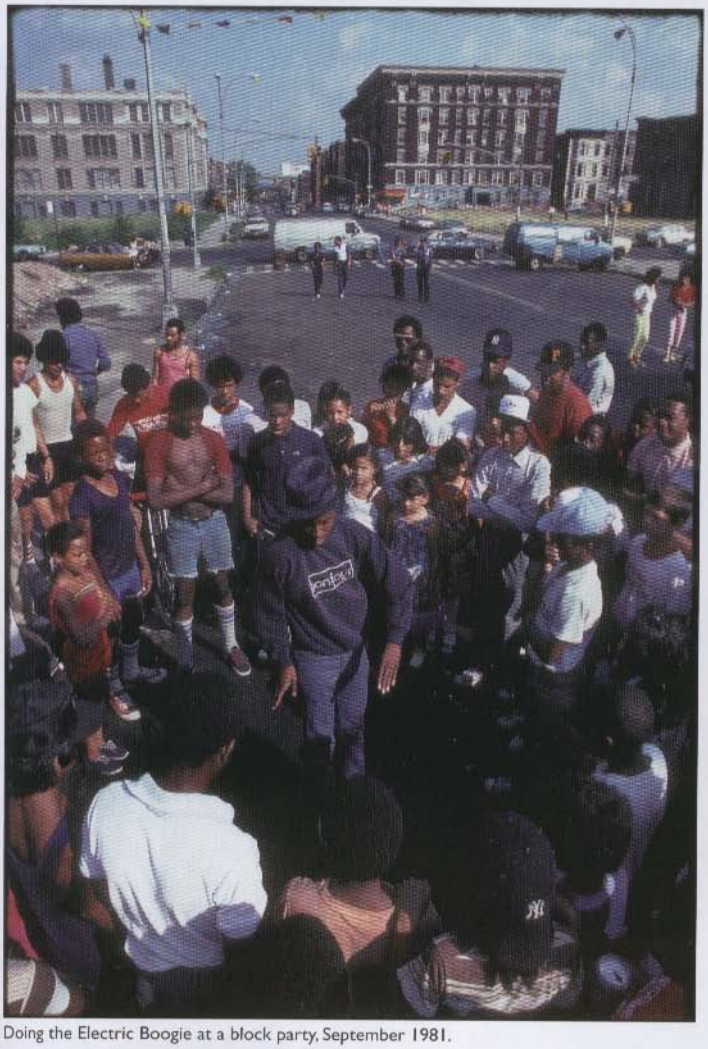
Martha Cooper: Artists, filmmakers, and photographers were instrumental in bringing early Hip Hop downtown and incorporating it into the existing, if offbeat, fashionable scene. These people, along with academics and journalists, connected the music with the art (graffiti) and dance (breaking) – something that might not have happened on its own.

Michel Holman: I first made contact with Fab 5 Freddy when Stan Peskett – an English artist and friend of mine – gave a party, which we put together at the Canal Zone on April 29, 1979. We invited Fab 5 Freddy, Lee, and other different graffiti artists. In the winter of 1980, I was involved in different breaking crews like IBM, the International Break Masters. As the manager of IBM, I pushed to get them gigs. Steve Mass at the Mudd Club let us do a couple of shows and that's when Fab introduced me to DJ Afrika Bambaata.

Fab 5 Freddy: Keith Haring had invited me to be part of a show at Club 57, which was a little gallery. I had Bambaata come and this was his first time playing downtown. He really liked playing for different crowds and that got him exposed out of the Bronx for the first time. In April 1981, I brought Bam and other DJ and MC crews from the Bronx to the "Beyond Words" show, which was the first big show of these artists performing downtown.

Michel Holman: I started spending more time uptown in the Bronx with Bambaata, filming him at the T-Connection, the club where he played a lot. In August of 1981, Stan Peskett introduced me to Malcolm McLaren, the ex-manager and creator of the SEX PISTOLS and then-manager of the English pop group Bow Wow Wow. I had a lot of respect for him because he was kind of a cultural impresario. Stan said, "Michael is involved in this new thing that is happening uptown. You should talk to him."

I figured Malcolm's interest in new pop culture was important and influential enough to warrant taking him to the Bronx to see what this Hip Hop thing was all about. Bambaata was doing a throw-down at the Bronx River Community Center. It seemed like a riot and it was very frightening for Malcolm. Kids were throwing bottles at windows and they were fighting everywhere. Malcolm wanted to leave and I was like, "No, no. Hang out." I said to Bambaata, "Listen, tell Jazzy to do some special mixing because otherwise we're gonna



Doing the Electric Boogie at a block party, September 1981.

The Kitchen, a SoHo center for avant-garde music, video, and performance. **Martha Cooper**: "Doze is flipping and Keith Haring and his boyfriend, Tseng Kwong Chi, are in the audience. Keith was already famous, and he brought the writers and b-boys into his world. He was a great fan and supporter." **Doze**: "People went, 'Look at these little kids rolling on the floor!' We were a spectacle!"

lose him. This is Malcom McLaren!" So he had Jazzy Jay do some special mixing and Malcom went, "Oh, this is great." That's where he saw quick cutting and scratching for the first time and I could tell he was quite turned-on by it all. I told him, "See this kid over there? That's breaking. Over there, that's graffiti," and so on.

I was hoping for a big breakthrough with this contact and it came. Malcolm said, "Put together a show and let them open for Bow Wow Wow." For that show, in late-summer of '81 at the Ritz, he let me book the opening acts: Bambaata, Jazzy Jay, and the Rock Steady Crew.

Ruza Blue: Rock Steady stole the Bow Wow Wow show at the Ritz, but in the end, Malcolm turned to Hip Hop.

Frosty Freeze: One month after the Lincoln Center performance, Michel Holman booked an opening show for Bow Wow Wow in the Village and Afrika Bambaata and Rock Steady Crew were asked to perform there.

We had never met Bambaata personally, although we went to many parties of his. He had read Martha's and Sally's *Village Voice* article and had seen how we started out. He knew that the Zulu Kings had inspired us, so Bambaata approached me and Legs and we asked him, "How could we be part of the Zulu Nation?" He said, "You are now Zulu Kings and Zulu b-boys."

Doze: After the Common Ground show, it kinda snowballed. We did a showcase in this place called The Kitchen. All the artists from downtown like Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and David Byrne of the Talking Heads were there. The whole SoHo scene wanted to check it out. We went to art spaces and exhibitions like the Mudd Club or Peppermint Lounge and to underground openings and punk rock clubs like Negril. It was a mixture.

"The fact that Hip Hop blew up was probably due to Fab 5 Freddy, Henry Chalfant, Martha Cooper, Patti Astor, and Ruza Blue", Doze

A lot of people thought, "Who are these brown kids jumping around like nuts?" Then there were other people taking it seriously as an art form and legitimate dance style. We were paid something stupid, like around 25 bucks each, but we drank for free. That was when it started getting aboveground.

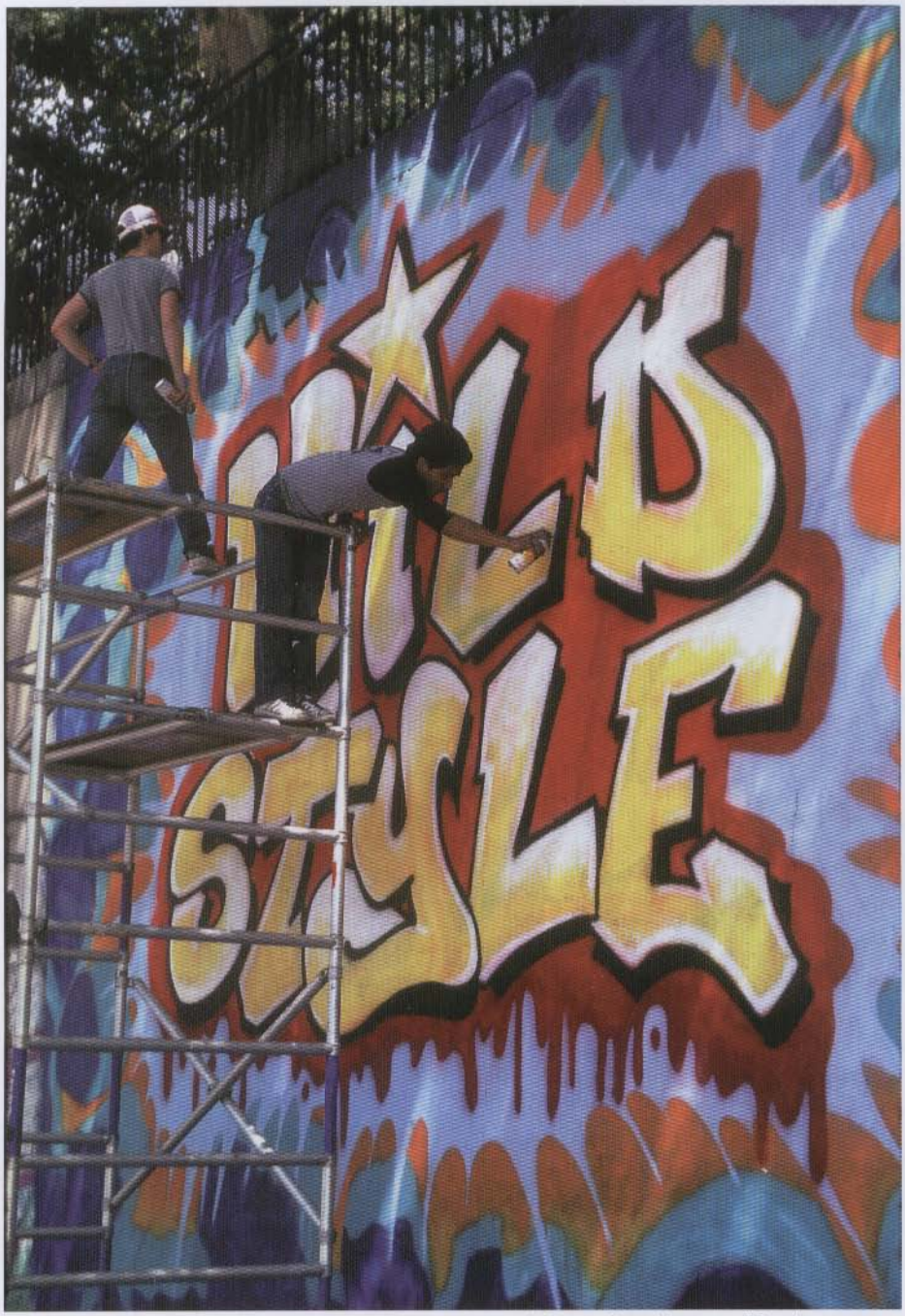
Getting up

Martha Cooper: I was living in Washington Heights and I saw that there were still early tags around the neighborhood so I decided to record them. At that time, and even today, people always tried to make a distinction between large graffiti pieces, which are art, and tags, which are closer to vandalism. I saw the tagging as a kind of calligraphy.

I began to see that there were certain conventions in tagging and that you couldn't separate the tags from the pieces. They were part of the same continuum. The tags were a kind of logo and they were as carefully thought out as any logo designed by a professional designer for a corporation. The writers designed their own tags and repeated them over and over so you could easily recognize a particular name from a distance.

I began to hunt for early tags, especially ones with some color, 3-D effect, or unusual style. I was very interested in all the different little symbols – the crowns, the smoking joints, the stars, the halos, and the street numbers.

Wicked Gary: I graduated junior high school in 1969. We formed the Ex Vandals in high school. We were all writers – it was something everyone did. One day Dino (NOD), the



"Sunset Orange, Aqua Turquise, Baby Blue! Dr. Revolt (l.) in outline mode, Sharpie-Sharp (r.) in action", Revolt.

original leader of the Ex-Vandals said, "Can you imagine all of us writing the same name instead of writing our individual names?" We were like, "That's awesome! If we all write the same name, this place will be completely inundated!" We were always told to go and be productive members of society, but we didn't have a lot of options so we created an identity through our alter-egos and we went out and asserted that identity.

We started getting recognition for what we did. We didn't have jobs, we didn't have money to do what we wanted to do. The only thing we had was an attitude that we needed to be something and we created that something with graf. We just took it and ran with it and it doesn't seem like graf has stopped running yet. We made an assertive aggressive effort to hit the city. The way we did what we did was the reason the city took notice and then the rest of the world took notice. Millions of dollars were spent to get rid of the so-called plague, but it's still alive.

Chino (BYI): A night of bombing fit into one plastic bag. Two quarts of Marsh, the T-Grade Ink, a school eraser, and on my way to the lay-up, I'd find me a 16-ounce soda bottle. I'd fill the bottle with ink and stick the eraser in there.

If someone had been up in the panel before me, it only took one big squeeze of that 16-ounce bottle and I'd bury the name that was underneath me. If you had been up in there before with a red Pilot, it was no match for my homemade marker. T-Grade Marsh would go over a red Pilot any day. I didn't care if you knew your shit was underneath mine. It was just my way of claiming it. We just learned how to take space – big drippy tags in the insides. My contemporaries had to write inside my "o" because I took up the whole panel. The beauty of the 16-ounce soda bottle was that I did not leave with any of my supplies. I left when my ink was dry. When I got stopped right outside that yard, I did not have anything on me. The quarts of ink were empty and my homemade marker was left in the yard.

Martha Cooper: I had many arguments with friends and co-workers because people at that time were really turned off by what they considered vandalism. I tried to explain that it wasn't all just vandalism, but it was hard to do because, in fact, there was a lot of tagging on marble sculptures and fronts of buildings and other places where people were really offended.

Of course, at that time, the insides of the trains were amazing. They were just covered with graffiti and were somewhat horrifying – a jungle of tags – and people were scared. It was a time in New York when there was a lot of crime in the city, a lot more than now, and people didn't know what to make of the tags. They couldn't read them so they felt that they were somehow dangerous. They felt assaulted and I could understand that point of view.

Wild Style

New York 1981-1983

Fab 5 Freddy: At that time, this rapping, breaking, and graffiti scene was not really connected as one thing. My idea was that this whole thing was one culture and that it should be shown as that. I felt that making a film about it would be a great way to show everybody that this was one thing. "The Times Square Show" was a big art show including Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Diego Cortez, who was a curator on the scene and who had invited me to that show, introduced me to Charlie Ahearn. I explained my idea of making a film about this culture and he liked it.

Lady Pink: Charlie Ahearn was in a club and he had seen the romance between Lee and me. There was so much love going on and he had seen that and wanted to write a story about it – a movie that blossomed in his head. The story is based on Lee's character. It was pretty much written about the things that Charlie Ahearn saw around him.

Charlie Ahearn: When I was preparing Wild Style, I wanted to make something that would be like a pop movie, not a documentary. I wanted to document things, but I also wanted to make a movie that would be shown at movie theaters. So this conflict between the two styles created the kind of movie it is. It is not really a commercial movie and it is not really a documentary.

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Most talked about 2003. Newspapers, televison and radio reported about New York graffitiwriter Desa's case, which in the end made him spend more than a year in prison

Fighting for the right to write

Desa is a graffiti writer from New York. In total, he has spent more than a year in jail because of writing. He does not feel he deserved these sentences. UP met him one day in April in New York.

Amid the sea of skyscrapers, burnt-out and abandoned ghetto buildings, subway trains thundering above you on huge steel girders, graffiti fits like a glove. Tags and throw-ups alternate. After a few days, you start to distinguish recurring names. Desa is one of them.

Desa shows me a few pens in different colors and sizes. In a typical New York accent, he tells me he mainly uses pens nowadays, and only occasionally uses cans.

Desa is a native New Yorker in his mid-twenties. He has been writing graffiti since the year 1990. Graffiti has given him a lot – probably more than he was expecting when he made his first tags.

He holds up a daily paper: "I was in a lot of papers, like this one, on the front page, page two and the middle. They told my story with lots of pictures. They actually walked six blocks and took pictures of everything I had. One on this block, one on that. And they wrote in the newspaper exactly where they were. I was in the Daily News, the New York Times. I was on MTV a couple of times."

How did it feel to wake up in the morning and see that?

"I remember I was laying in bed and my brother was home. He turned the TV on to the NY1 channel. In the morning, this channel always goes through what's in the newspapers. And this morning, everywhere was my name, and my graffiti. So I jumped out of bed and into the room where my brother was. I asked him: 'When did that happen?' 'When did it happen?' he said. 'Where the fuck have you been? It happened now!' he took out a newspaper and threw it at me. He said: 'You wanna be famous, right? Well, you're fuckin' famous now. Are you happy?' That was unbelievable."

"He turned the tv on to the NY1 channel and everywhere was my name, and my graffiti."

It all started in Glendale in Queens in late 1991. Desa had made several tags in the area and was one of the more prominent writers.

"They were buffing a whole lot. What these guys did – they weren't cops, they were community people – was that they were out cruising at night trying to catch people tagging, to do a citizen's arrest. One night my friend saw them, and he stopped to talk to them. They told him that they were buffing, but only my 'D'. They would leave the rest of the tag. They said they did that to make me come back, to catch me or videotape me. My friend, who pretended he didn't like graffiti very much, got a card from tem with information about their anti-graffiti program.

"After that, we started to call them, to fuck with them. I was just playing around. I told them on the phone that I was going to burn down their office, threats like that. Nonsense, it was little kid's stuff."

Desa didn't know the conversations had been reported to the police and were being traced.

"They traced one of the calls to my friend's house, and that's how they got me. They had my voice on tape, stating my tag. By the time I got arrested, I had just turned seventeen. They brought me to the police station and started asking questions and showing photos of stuff they said I did. They got me to admit to the phone calls and some graffiti. I was a kid. I didn't know any better. Ever since then I would never admit to anything again. A cop does not want to be your friend!

In New York, when you're over sixteen, you're considered an adult, so I had to go through the while court system, central booking and everything."

Desa was given a three-year suspended sentence and 1,000 hours of community service.

Barely a year later, Desa was once again arrested along with some friends, this time on suspicion for writing in the subway. The

Desa – Phonebooth in New York City

Desa – New York City, 2004

machinery started up again. The charges against Desa's friends were dropped, and Desa was once again alone on the scene.

"They did this to get me alone in court, and to say that I was the dominant character."

Desa says that the ones who worked hard to get him sentenced were the people behind the Queens anti-graffiti campaign, using their contacts to get a harsh sentence.

"Normally, in New York, when you're arrested for graffiti, you get charged with a felony, but they lower it to a misdemeanor because the costs don't go over $250.00. With me, they got the costs to be almost $1000.00. In the end, I got a felony sentence, which is prison for 1 to 3 years. The District Attorney, she was really aggressive, even wanted me to be taken in that day, saying that I would disappear if they let me go until I had to go to prison. It was ridiculous."

Desa says that the real reason for the anti-graffiti campaign in Queens, and their actions against him, were more complex than a simple dislike of graffiti. He explains the complicated relationship between the Glendale, Ridgewood and Bushwick areas that lie on the border between Brooklyn and Queens. Ridgewood was previously a part of Brooklyn but now belongs to Queens. Ridgewood's closest neighbor in Brooklyn is Bushwick, which is where everything started.

"Bushwick changed very fast. It used to be a white neighborhood, but it is all Puerto Rican and Black now. All these white people who used to live there moved to Ridgewood or Glendale. So these community people hated graffiti because it brought the property value down, and what they don't want to say, is when the property value goes down, the Blacks and the Puerto Ricans move in. Because Ridgewood is next to Bushwick, they figure that Ridgewood is the next to go. What they do is that they manage to get Ridgewood to be a part of Queens instead of Brooklyn. Things are different in Queens than in Brooklyn. Queens is the most anti-graffiti neighborhood. So that's how they managed to fuck with me so bad."

After six months in a jail in upstate New York, Desa could participate in a so-called Work Release Program. He could sleep at

"It ended up with me doing eight months at Riker's Island."

home for five nights a week. This was later increased to seven nights a week, with reporting to his parole officer.

Then in early 1996, it happened again.

"I got arrested by the Vandal Squad for graffiti. It didn't look so good, I'd just got parole, and now I'm arrested for the same thing again.

After spending nearly two days in central booking I got to see the judge. He was in a really bad mood because the guy before me was charged with killing a cop. After that, the mood was really bad. The Judge then gave me $50,000 bail, which is crazy. My lawyer got it down to $25,000, which didn't help because I didn't have any money anyway.

It ended up with me doing eight months out of a year – it's called a misdemeanor year in New York – at Riker's Island."

After Riker's Island, it wasn't long before Desa was charged again, but this time he was innocent. After having been in the vicinity of some other writers making tags, Desa was arrested and charged.

"One of the other guys and me got charged for tagging. They charged me just because of who I was. They knew that if they charged me it was going to stick, because I had a record already. And that looks good on their records.

My firend who got charged with me got community service, and they were done with him. But he was still standing next to me. So he says: 'He didn't do anything, I was the one who wrote.' But it didn't really help. Instead, they gave him more community service and a bigger fine. Then they basically threw him out of the courtroom. They put me in arrest again. I couldn't get bailed out. And it made me sick. It was happening again, and I wasn't even doing anything this time. All the other guys who got arrested with me could go home, but I had to stay. I was out of my mind. So I had to wait another two days before I could get bailed out. And I got probation again – three years probation. For nothing."

In total, Desa has spent more than a year in jail because of graffiti.

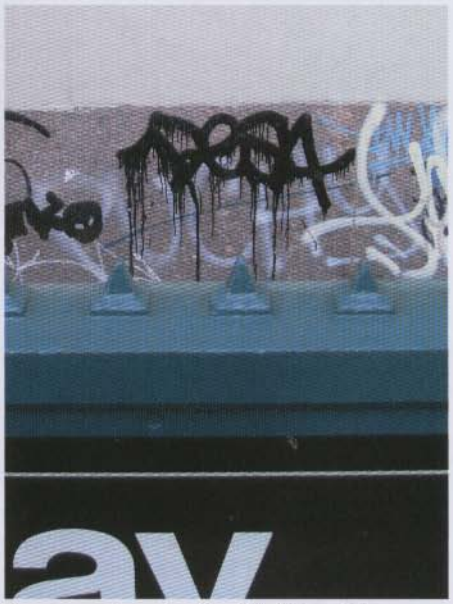
How was it in jail?

"Jail sucks in general. It's hard for me to explain the stress from being in jail. For me, to be in jail for what I did was ridiculous. It was really stressful for me. But I didn't have any problems with fighting or anything like that."

Desa, tags in a New York Subwaycar

Desa, Mta – New York Subway

Ve, a friend and a member of Desa's crew who died in 1997



Desa at an entrance to a New Yotk Subwaystation

So it's not like in the movies?

"It is and it ain't. It depends which prison you're in. Maximum security prison is very different from the ones I was in. I was in jail facility. A medium security prison is like an army camp, but it is bad anyway. It's not a joke. A lot of people join gangs because they are afraid something might happen to them without backup. But then again, that will cause problems: if somebody in your gang is a troublemaker, if he does something, no matter if you agree with it or not, you have to help him out. It's about avoiding any type of gambling, borrowing anything, or drugs. If you stay away from these key things, you are going to have less of a chance to have problems. I didn't do any of those things. They don't appeal to me.

But other than that, the whole situation is a nightmare. Everything that goes on in jail is negativity. Everybody got to act tough, everybody got to stand up and defend themselves from anything. You look at me or you say good morning to me – '*What the fuck do you mean, good morning?!*' People have to get up and challenge that good morning remark. It's bad.

All the trouble I went through from the beginning of the 90s to now, the average person could never do it. I get irritated when people whine about getting arrested, and they don't realize what I've been through. Some people think that I was in some special jail, some small kids' graffiti jail. It's unbelievable."

Despite his jail time and all the troubles he has had because of graffiti, Desa sees no reason to quit.

"I guess they think I'm going to quit now. Why would I stop now? For me, graffiti is so much. I have been prosecuted so bad. They did everything they could to me. I am fighting for my right to break the law. To write graffiti."

Torkel Sjöstrand

Desa, Ked – New York City

Desa – New York City

Who is hiding behind the tags?

At about the same time, three writers from different parts of Sweden started writing tags denoting members of the opposite sex. Was this a sign of graffiti getting less macho, or just nice lettering?

We became curious, and called up **Girl**, **Lady** and **Woman**.

Girl is the least talkative. He might go as far as to say that it is a celebration of the opposite sex.

Lady is more talkative. He says he was always bullied for being slow.

"'You're like an old lady, standing there messing with details!' That's what they say sometimes. Sure, it might be a prejudice, that girls are vain and like putting on a bit of make-up... In the same way, I want to fix my piece and put on cool fresh-ups, like eye shadow and all that. If you're attentive to detail, you are seen as slow and effeminate in the male-dominated graffiti culture..."

Have you heard any comments, or feedback from other writers, after choosing your name?

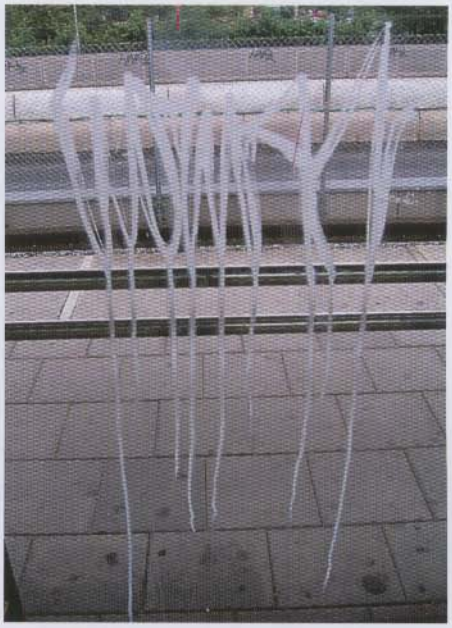
"Well, I guess some of them think it's pretty silly. But I don't really care. It's probably the best tag I ever had otherwise. It feels as if I'd always signed myself that way when I sketch those letters. Maybe because I've always been silly..."

Woman says that he and Phily first wrote Woman together. Then, it was the meaning of the word itself that was interesting. Afterwards, Woman continued using the letters himself.

"Once you've got a tag, you stop thinking about what it really means. You grow into the letters and fill them with graphic content," says Woman. He adds that he sometimes wonders what other writers think of him: perhaps that he is gay, or a girl.

Is that part of the charm of a tag like this, making people wonder?

"Yes, actually. Nobody really knows who's hiding behind the tags, anyway."



Writing bikes against Bush

In future, you may not have to stop and write your tag manually. Just program your computer, jump on your bicycle, and that's half the work done. Thanks to Joshua Kinberg's Master's Thesis in Design and Technology at the Parsons School of Design in New York, the future is already here.

The writing bike is officially launched under the name Bikes Against Bush when the Republican National Convention takes over NYC from the 30th of August to the 4th of September. Bikes Against Bush is a dynamic protest in the shape of a performance occurring simultaneously on the streets of NYC and on the Web during the convention. With the help of a portable computer, the bicycle can receive text messages from online users in real-time through the project website, and the cyclist can decide when and where to print them.

When the cyclist prints a message, bikesagainstbush.com automatically updates a live map marking the location of the message. The spray-chalk text remains on the street for 15 to 30 days till the chalk biodegrades, or can be washed off easily with water.

Why are you doing this?

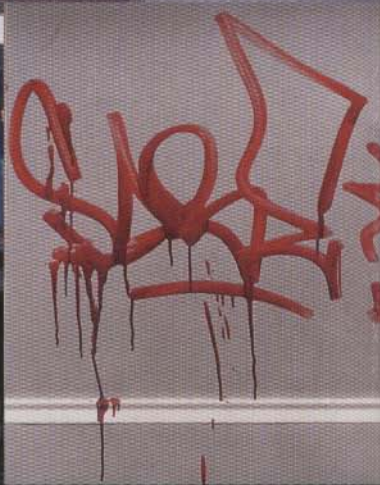
"The goal of Bikes Against Bush is to serve as an inspirational and working model for alternative, creative political resistance," says Joshua Kinberg. "I believe that it's important to stand up for what you believe in. As an American, it is my right to openly express disagreement with the government. I love this country, and I think my views are shared by many who are simply outraged by the disastrous policies of the Bush administration. While the mainstream media delivers its version of the RNC on the nightly news, Bikes Against Bush will engage New Yorkers and Convention delegates on the streets through direct action, tactical media, and a viral Internet campaign."

What are the future plans for your invention?

"I have been contacted with several enquiries from companies wishing to use this tool for marketing and promotions in other cities in the US and Europe. We'll see what the future holds. Right now I'm focused on the convention and turning out the vote in November."

Björn Almqvist

Find out more about the writing bike at www.bikesagainstbush.com



faktsikt älskar nån??

Du kille som klottrade xeno på pendeln. du är det snyggaste jag sett! *Latinan längst bak i vagnen*

Var finns alla häftiga killar? Trött på svenska mesar. *My*

Stockholm City, August 9, 2004